

**Redressing the Likeness of Power:
Locating the Pursuit of Justice in the Space of
Contested Commemoration**

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ABSTRACT

The commemoration of historical violence by inscription into the American built landscape is selective. While there have been increasing attempts to expand interpretive representation at sites of contested heritage, relatively little has been undertaken to explicitly address the public's role in calling attention to events effaced by the selective portrayal of history. Inspired by actions taken by protesters in August 2017 to remove a 1924 memorial to Confederate soldiers in Durham, North Carolina, this project explores the role of direct public intervention at monuments whose selective commemoration of power has obscured a dimension of historical violence. Three case studies of critical interventions are developed, which occurred at the Haymarket Riot Monument in Chicago, the J. Marion Sims memorial in New York City, and the Oñate Monument and Visitor's Center in New Mexico. By looking at monuments culturally and geographically, rather than art historically, this project reaffirms the stakes of monument conservation as having lived consequences for communities, as well as for society at large.

As stewards of the material traces of history, the conservation fields mediate the public's interaction with symbols of power. Through an examination of narratives both legitimized and obscured through commemorative space, meaningful connections are drawn between the designed intentions of monuments and the organized critique of public voices in asserting agency over complex everyday interactions with the past. By endeavoring to better understand these moments of contestation, preservationists can develop more honest and authentic approaches to conserving fraught representations of history in public space.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

When protesters pulled down a Confederate statue in Durham, North Carolina in August of 2017, two days after a white supremacist rally gathered to protest the removal of a statue of General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, the American public and historians alike were left feeling dizzy and conflicted. The public discourse surrounding the removal of symbols to the Confederacy throughout the American South had gained renewed urgency in 2015 after white supremacist Dylann Roof murdered nine African American congregants at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and it now appeared to be escalating further, in multiple directions. While condemning the violence in Charlottesville that culminated in the death of counter-protester Heather Heyer, many lawmakers and heritage professionals were nevertheless also compelled to disavow the group in Durham for refusing to pursue formal channels for decommissioning the monument.

The evening after the event, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper tweeted: “The racism and deadly violence in Charlottesville is unacceptable but there is a better way to remove these monuments #durham.”¹

Yet while the group in Durham was indisputably driven to action in the immediate wake of Charlottesville’s terrifying display of white nationalism, it had also

¹ Cooper (@NC_Governor), August 14, 2017.

become increasingly clear throughout the year prior that no viable, formal channel truly existed to have the statue removed from public property. According to North Carolina General Statute (G.S.) § 100-2.1, passed only in July of 2015, no municipal authority had the power to alter any “object of remembrance” located in public space without the state’s permission.² And so, as law enforcement personnel watched from a distance, 22-year-old student and activist Takiyah Thompson climbed a ladder and looped a tow strap around the soldier’s form before a group on the ground pulled it swiftly off its pedestal. The crowd cheered; many stomping triumphantly upon the distorted bronze form (Figure 1). Together, a frustrated group of citizens had carried out an alteration to a historical marker in public space that they knew lawmakers could not achieve.

The commemoration of historical violence by inscription into the American built landscape is invariably selective, but it need not remain precisely so in perpetuity. Inspired by the cultural moment surrounding this particular event in Durham, this project explores the role of direct public intervention at monuments that obscure dimensions of historical violence through the incomplete or asymmetrical representation of power. The context for this thesis is this fact of selective inscription, and its motivation is the imperative for critical intervention at sites whose interpretive content erases more than it reveals.

² Graham, “Red State, Blue City,” 2017.



Image 01: Still from a video taken by onlookers. Source: *Huffington Post*
 Image 02: Protesters cheer after the statue falls. Source: *CNN*

While there have been increasing attempts to expand interpretive representation at sites of contested heritage, relatively little has been undertaken to explicitly address the public's role in calling attention to events effaced by the selective portrayal of history. What follows is the result of an experiment in reevaluating the materially

destructive actions carried out by members of the public for their embedded claims to socio-spatial justice in historical representation. By looking at monuments culturally and geographically, rather than art historically, this project reaffirms the stakes of monument conservation as having lived consequences for communities, as well as for society at large.

In the following chapters, three case studies of unauthorized intervention at public monuments are developed, occurring at the Haymarket Riot Monument in Chicago, the J. Marion Sims memorial in New York City, and the Oñate Monument and Visitor's Center in New Mexico. By examining other instances of public protest and material intervention at these diverse sites of commemoration, the aim is to elaborate the constructive and progressive effects of public critique at sites of incomplete and obscured reference to collective traumas, towards the possibility of reorienting heritage policy and management practice to better serve the public's changing needs for remembrance.

Ultimately, this study contends that critical interventions at commemorative sites that represent historical power are important insofar as they creatively disrupt the ascension of material representations into the realms of apparent truth in permanence – they reclaim historical narratives for public interpretation. As protectors of material heritage, the conservation fields are in an important position of mediating the public's interaction with symbols of power. What is the responsibility of heritage professionals to respond to and integrate moments of public dispute with regards to representations of trauma in our shared past? This project aims to locate ways that the heritage fields

might better engage with such interventions in order to contribute meaningfully to the resolution of conflicts rooted in conflicting claims to spatialized narratives of the past.

SCOPE

History may appear through its material traces to be a more permanent source of truth in the face of the imprecision of memory. But the politics of our collective past and its spaces of intentional or inherited commemoration play out through moments of *change*—through the oscillations of national debate and the relative amplification of different voices.

Many European cities have confronted these processes of negotiating public memory more directly and with more global visibility than many other national or regional settings because of the ubiquity of spatial traces of trauma that scarred their cities throughout the 20th century. Places like Berlin and Vienna have come to understand their spaces of memory as a function of the social practices that mediate both traumatic recall and collective future-building. Public memories of the Holocaust were forged under a global consensus about its significance as a rupture in modernity,³ yet other events of state violence—especially those with a deeper history—are more often not granted such decisive international *ex post facto* judgement.

Once we understand the past to be a space—both metaphorical and real—of social struggle, the role of the historic preservationist is reformulated as the stewardship of material- and place-based narratives that always inherently change in

³ Till, *The New Berlin*, 161.

meaning, if not also in content. As key sites of societal reflection and political contestation, heritage places must be engaged with critically for their capacities to reproduce social relations and cultural narratives of power.

This study will examine, in tandem, both a specific genre of site and a particular mode of contestation. Here, the “public monument” is a subject of analysis, not for its expert-appraised value as public art or historical reference, but instead for its tactical utility in crystallizing critical, collective agency. Indeed, there exist a great many important distinctions internal to the monument genre itself. For the purposes of this study, a public monument is understood to be a free-standing, sculptural composition that aims to represent an individual or event of historical importance. At times accompanied by sparse textual interpretation, these commemorative spaces are most often framed merely by an inscribed name and date. Some are called “memorials” to mark tragedy. Others depict feats of heroism or virtuosity. Many encompass both dimensions, representing a visual narrative of rightful triumph over collective loss or trial. Located in publicly accessible, everyday spaces, these monuments are primarily apprehended—and socially constructed—through practices of passive, quotidian cohabitation rather than the more pedagogically oriented experience within a museum.

Confederate monuments are only one iteration of the practice of selective commemoration whereby an event of historical violence becomes transmuted into a triumphal narrative of rightful sacrifice. In this way, specific regimes of (white, male, capitalist) power are made both ubiquitous and legitimate. Other historical struggles which have been thusly “silenced” in (and by) the commemorative landscape of the United States include losses mourned by Native Americans, labor rights organizers,

and women, in addition to those experienced by communities of color—whose participation in each of these other struggles is often made ever-more invisible by intersectional exacerbation.

These are sites that have been revealed to exemplify the (re)production of historical silences in spaces of remembrance through the illuminating actions of communities who refuse to be forgotten. To the extent that these actions, which will be defined here as “critical interventions,” have succeeded in revealing narratives obscured by official representations, and in changing the public discourse to reflect concerns over selective commemorations of history, this study contends that these interventions contribute invaluable public engagements with history, creating new opportunities for collective remembrance through the manipulation of a site’s spatial or material integrity.

I define these “silences,” after Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s use of the term,⁴ by the symbolic and spatial replacement of narratives of violence with the image of power—places of selective historical reverence which have the effect of legitimizing an underlying narrative of violent injustice by cleansing it from spatial visibility. A similar notion has been employed by a project entitled “The Politics of Remembrance,” which is currently underway by researchers at the University of Vienna. To understand a progression of historical phases since 1945 in which the political violence of Austrofascism and Nazism was contended with through public commemoration, this project differentiates memorials that address political violence—understood as

⁴ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 1995.

gestures of “remembering”—from those that omit it, which are understood as gestures of “forgetting.”⁵ For the sake of clarity, this study will employ Trouillot’s verb of ‘silencing’ to make reference to a union of these aligned concepts.

Another notion borrowed from the Politics of Remembrance project in Vienna is the term “mnemonic actor.” In the project principals’ usage, mnemonic actors are those who “decide to whom they dedicate a memorial and what these memorials address.”⁶ However, for the purpose of arguments made here, the notion of mnemonic actors has been expanded to include those beyond official decision-making roles. It is precisely this category of unofficial mnemonic actor that is positioned instead to carry out the acts referred to here as “critical interventions.”

These interventions take effect as spatial contestations that range from conventional protest, to performative reinterpretation, to material alteration and even to complete annihilation. The critical interventions carried out at each of these sites are defined by the dual injustice of A) an original violation in history, signified for only certain communities precisely by its representational absence, and B) the designed effacement of this violation in subsequent decisions about public space. Such iconoclastic gestures reflect changing needs for remembrance in evolving social conditions—they reveal silenced truths and create new opportunities for reflection/interpretation.

The scope of this project will not attempt to address an in-depth art historical understanding of aesthetic transformations in urban space, nor will it analyze

⁵ Universität Wien, “Politics of Remembrance.”

⁶ Universität Wien, “Politics of Remembrance.”

fluctuations in the architectural or material cultures which may have influenced the production of 20th century monumentality. The point of interest here is rather the precise moment of crisis when public opinion comes into conflict with—and cannot be integrated into—the professionalized purview of the historic preservation field as a result of a much broader cultural rejection of property destruction. It is the point at which the preservationist’s allegiance to materiality becomes an *obstacle* to attending to his or her other apparent commitments to place, such as understanding cultural value and advocating for social significance.

This study is intended to reinforce an already expanding shift of focus, well underway in the heritage fields, towards the service of ends beyond our own realms of immediate influence—reframing the work of heritage conservation, preservation, interpretation, and advocacy to be in service of other social imperatives rather than existing in any objective realm of intrinsic value. The cases and arguments developed here take this project further by making explicit claims to the relevance of commemorative spaces to struggles for justice.

METHODOLOGIES

At its core, this thesis is a comparative study which develops three case studies of critical interventions by unauthorized, public groups at sites of selective commemoration. Anchored by these similarities, each case nevertheless demonstrates a unique array of social and cultural factors, including the site’s historical and commemorative values, the interests of stakeholders involved, and the policy environment upon which its alteration is contingent. Each instance furthermore

includes a distinct set of responses from political and heritage decision-makers in the wake of critical interventions themselves. The peculiarities of each case, compared in detail in the findings synthesized in Chapter Six, provide an instructive array of entry points through which to speculate about methods to achieve improved mutual understandings at contested monument sites.

Research methods have included academic and media discourse analysis, as well as active stakeholder network analysis, supplemented in turn by archival and interview-derived qualitative data. By expanding the relevant sources of historical production to include a variety of discursive and spatialized narratives, as well as those asserted through demonstrated dissent, this approach aims to broaden how the significance of heritage places are assessed—to better calibrate the heritage field's attentions to a wider field of historiographic sources throughout everyday life.

Each case study examines a monument which exists as a gesture of selective commemoration—a selective veneration of power—in which the use of violence has been obscured or erased entirely. The first looks at a site which venerated the use of power against political dissidents struggling for labor rights, the second celebrates the achievements of a patriarchal science at the expense of enslaved women of color, and the third celebrates colonial conquest while obscuring the violence of the colonial encounter. The image of the policeman in Haymarket Square legitimized the execution of political dissidents in Chicago in the 1880s; the image of Dr. J. Marion Sims legitimizes the bodily violation of enslaved women of color in Montgomery, Alabama in the 1840s; the image of Don Juan de Oñate legitimizes the enslavement, extermination, and brutal colonization of Pueblo peoples throughout the 17th century in what is now

the American southwest. A policeman, a doctor, and a military governor: each commemorative space precludes sympathetic identification with the overpowered subaltern by marking in space and time the superiority of a white male in power, and by cleansing the representational space of any reference to the violence perpetrated.

Each of these sites has been contested spatially by a later critical intervention. Each intervention has served to alter the site's perceived significance. By examining the goals and strategies of unauthorized mnemonic actors at work in carrying out critical interventions at sites which represent political power—in comparison with those of their authorized counterparts—this study hopes to demonstrate that some forms of material loss or alteration may be capable of producing new opportunities for remembrance, and new public representations of history.

What can “historic preservation” contribute to the debate about monument removal? The question is unavoidably political, and the politics of remembrance in the United States has not yet sufficiently interrogated the role of public actors in the production of spatialized history. This thesis contends that issues of spatial justice are relevant to historic preservationists to the extent that the cause of preservation is one of social wellbeing and historical authenticity. The connections between people and place are forged as a function of time and of narration itself.

Insofar as each critical intervention transacts in a vocabulary of image and space, this analysis looks towards notions of spatial justice developed by geographers Don Mitchell, David Harvey and Edward Soja. The perspective of radical geography has been instructive in the extent to which it brings critical attention to power as a function of space. The heritage fields have indeed increasingly explored such

connections themselves, elaborating upon the political work of conservation and preservation practice with great purpose. Yet significant gaps remain.

The narrative arc of this thesis will foreground a series of theoretical positions before testing their claims in three case studies. Chapter Two charts the conceptual roots of these positions in academic study and heritage practice through a review of literature upon which this project builds and to which it seeks to contribute new connections. Beginning with a brief survey of 20th century cultural perspectives on public monuments and their destruction, focus shifts to the development of spatial justice as a foundational concept in radical geography since 1970, before discussing trajectories in critical heritage studies to which this study aims to contribute additional practical methods.

Chapter Three examines the range of memorials to the Haymarket Affair in Chicago—most notably the official image of a peace-loving policeman, at which generations of social activists have enacted spatial critique. At Haymarket Square, political struggle itself became inscribed into the landscape through dramatic material confrontations with the policeman statue, only to be programmatically wiped clean by newly depoliticized commemorative gestures at each juncture. Through art historical reference to studies of iconoclasm, this chapter touches on the role of secondary media representations in relation to more fundamental alterations of spatial relationships carried out through urban renewal. In the end, space itself retains paramount significance in the conveyance of historical meaning.

Chapter Four examines the recent decision in New York City to partially relocate a memorial to Dr. J. Marion Sims from its current location on the eastern edge of

Central Park to his gravesite in Brooklyn. This case blurs the boundary between ‘unauthorized’ mnemonic actors and preservationists through the organizational agent of East Harlem Preservation, which has led the campaign to remove this monument from public space for more than eight years. While the statue has been the subject of minimally invasive material interventions—such as splattered paint and temporary obstruction of its interpretive text—most of the critical interventions at this statue have primarily involved art and performance. By mapping onto the bodies of performers the violence obscured by the statue, missing narratives have been made newly visible in order to register the local community’s claims for justice. Through a close reading of the report and proceedings published by the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers, this chapter considers attempts to establish and formalize a reproducible process for soliciting and measuring public opinion with regards to the preservation of public monuments.

Chapter Five examines the Oñate Monument in northern New Mexico. At this monument, long-buried histories have reemerged in public consciousness through a powerful symbolic gesture of property destruction. This chapter will explore a new opportunity for progressive heritage management through the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area, which as the current tenants of the Oñate visitor center, must presently contend with the statue’s inflammatory effect. This challenge highlights a deeply entrenched conflict of identity-driven historical narratives. Can strategies for reconciliation make productive use of this contentious image of power? Following the work of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, this chapter argues that representations of historical conflict can be redeployed to serve wider justice goals by

making the struggle for rights both visible and equally accessible. This is an experiment in shared inquiry.

Lastly, Chapter Six synthesizes findings from these cases towards the development of (inter)disciplinary recommendations. To the extent that materiality and spatial arrangements are productive of social relationships, preservationists should be more concerned with the effects of historical productions rather than their mere material conservation. It is important to apprehend and address the negative effects of commemorative materiality in relation to that which it has been designed to recall. Preservationists must be able and willing to advocate for the removal or alteration of certain forms of built heritage, but firstly they must be educated in apprehending and evaluating different claims to spatial justice. In these instances, and in others, "public commemoration" is much more about claims to the spaces and practices of memory than it is about "historical truth." If the field of historic preservation cares about people and the educative power of history, then it must not only be cognizant of the detrimental effects of some mnemonic forms, but it must also be willing to engage with the production of new and more equitable forms of historical representation which may also concede the loss of others.

CHAPTER TWO

A Review of Literature on Commemoration, Iconoclasm, and the Spatial Politics of Historic Preservation

“Without memory, without reading the traces of the past, there can be no recognition of difference...no tolerance for the rich complexities and instabilities of personal and cultural, political and national identities” - Andreas Huyssen⁷

What follows will situate this project within disparate bodies of relevant research at the intersections of public commemoration, image-breaking and social justice. It is by no means exhaustive but will nevertheless begin to knit together a platform for the case studies to follow. Beginning with a brief discussion of memorials in 20th century cultural and art historical thought, the first portion endeavors to highlight the contributions of Kenneth Foote and Andreas Huyssen, before reflecting upon recent studies of iconoclastic destruction of cultural heritage provided by the work of Jas Elsner.

The next section shifts focus to the work of radical geographers in carving out theories of spatial justice. With particular reference to Edward Soja, David Harvey and Don Mitchell, this body of work builds upon Henri Lefebvre’s notions of the social production of public space in order to craft a proactive understanding of the functioning of power through spatial distributions of resources and representation.

⁷ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 251-2.

Finally, these concerns for justice and public space are traced into the realm of Critical Heritage Studies, as articulated through the work of Laurajane Smith and Rodney Harrison, among others. By deploying a discourse of rights and increasingly self-identifying under a banner of justice, the heritage profession has begun to articulate its responsibility towards the public realm as increasingly one of social and educational provocation rather than consolidation.

ON COMMEMORATION & IMAGE BREAKING

The goal of a public monument has never been precisely the same in any two instances, and its meanings will forever change through time. While the commemorative gesture can often fail to represent the full range of the public's imperatives for historical remembrance, the gesture of a public memorial is nevertheless often grounded in an effort to unify collective memory practices.

Michael Rowland and Christopher Tilley's review of literature on "Monuments and Memorials" in *The Handbook of Material Culture* provides a comprehensive introduction to how these built elements of public space have been designed and thought about since the Enlightenment.⁸ Recalling the classic arguments of David Lowenthal⁹ and Pierre Nora,¹⁰ monuments have been understood to project the image of permanence onto landscapes in order to deny the realities of change, effectively estranging modern memory to apparent social safekeeping within the officially

⁸ Rowland and Tilley, "Monuments and Memorials," 2006.

⁹ *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 1985.

¹⁰ "Les lieux de memoire," 1989.

sanctified objects of museums and public memorials.¹¹ Highlighting the uniquely iconic and indexical qualities of monuments, the authors remind readers of the dual function of monuments to “evoke feelings through their materiality and form as well as symbolize social narratives of events and sacrifices retold in public rituals.”¹²

Kenneth Foote’s *Shadowed Ground*, first published in 1997, provides an invaluable rubric for understanding the range of ways that events of violence or tragedy have been commemorated throughout the landscape of the United States in particular.¹³ Crucial to the theoretical and physical territories that Foote covers in his text is an overriding inquiry into the selectivity behind the marking of these events into physical space. Why do some events transcend into lasting physical form while others are brushed aside and forgotten? To answer, Foote divides commemorative gestures into four categories, comprising sanctification, designation, rectification, and obliteration, in order to chart the meaningfully complex processes through which sites are ritually transformed to meet a variety of collective and/or political goals. Foote defines a ‘monument’ as the product of sanctification, whereby “[a] site is transformed into a symbol intended to remind future generations of a virtue or sacrifice or to warn them of events to be avoided.”¹⁴

Foote dedicates his final chapter to a close examination of the vast majority of tragedies whose events are not etched into America’s landscape. While some of these events will eventually be revealed or acknowledged through later excavation of site or

¹¹ Rowland and Tilley, “Monuments and Memorials,” 500.

¹² Rowlands and Tilley, “Monuments and Memorials,” 500.

¹³ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 2003.

¹⁴ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 8.

public memory, the failure to commemorate many has not transpired in error, but rather reflect “issues of unresolved meaning and to conflicts over memory.”¹⁵ The most complex, but arguably most important of these historical lacunae involve the remembrance or commemoration of sites whose stories can only be told “at the expense of other sites that have already been consecrated to local, regional, and national historical traditions.”¹⁶ The challenge here is not merely to produce new memorials, but “rather of altering existing traditions enough to make room for new meanings.”¹⁷

This is of particular relevance to the marking of African American and Native American history in the United States. To stress the heroic aspects of the struggles over slavery and the suppression of Native American cultures is to question other traditions that have already been marked in landscape. Once consecrated, sites do not always give way easily to revision.¹⁸

Unmarked sites fall into the categories of either unresolved meaning, which includes the history of labor struggles as well as the shameful histories of concentration camps and other national injustices, or ongoing conflicted meaning, such as many events of great importance to indigenous and African American histories. Foote identifies a lack of “interpretive scaffolding” as one obstacle to the project of commemorative alterations.¹⁹ There is little precedent for a public apology to be etched over prior inscriptions in granite.

The broad explanation for this constitutive selectivity of commemoration that Foote is able to provide is rooted in an essential cultural ambivalence towards violence

¹⁵ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 293.

¹⁶ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 193.

¹⁷ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 293.

¹⁸ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 293-4.

¹⁹ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 305.

that is demonstrated by the United States throughout its history. American commemorative traditions have developed so closely in tandem with the projects of nationalism and narratives of American exceptionalism that some forms of violence have come to be understood as tolerable—and therefore forgetably unremarkable—while others are rendered significant through their visible and demonstrative adherence to archetypes of American virtue or national “character.”²⁰ Violence itself is “tightly interwoven with the myth of the frontier and with the celebration of the national past.”²¹

Ultimately, Foote locates many productive opportunities in the casting of light upon sites overlooked by the scattered memorial inscriptions of the American landscape. Through the explicit confrontation of our traditions of commemoration, we might also address more directly our historical and persisting cultural relationships with violence itself.

In Europe, the conversation about the nature and function of public memorials has revolved primarily around questions of how to commemorate the overwhelming tragedies which transpired during the Holocaust. For Andreas Huyssen, Holocaust memorials have often demanded the reproduction of violences past through their chosen strategies of representation. In his chapter “Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age,” in *Twilight Memories*, Huyssen discusses the public memorial in the context of multivalent, digital representations.²² The impulse to honor the dead by built marker is an ancient one whose cultural and political rationales are

²⁰ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 294.

²¹ Foote, *Shadowed Ground*, 334.

²² Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 249–77.

difficult to accurately discern. However, in contemporary late-capitalist societies, the memorial functions as both an impetus for and an obstacle to the development of social solidarity for societies scarred by violence. By honoring death in its formal purpose, the memorial contains violence as both risk and goal.

Nevertheless, Andreas Huyssen, Thomas Stubblefield and others,²³ have also remarked upon the unique value of materiality in the context of overabundant and ever-changing digital media representations. “The permanence of the monument and the museum object, formerly criticized as deadening reification, takes on a different role in a culture dominated by the fleeting image on the screen and the immateriality of communications.”²⁴ The physical locatedness, the *site-ness* and materiality of the memorial is, according to Huyssen, more relevant to social symbolism by sheer contrast to the ‘spectacle’ and immateriality of everyday exchange.

In a compilation of essays entitled *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*, editors Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin remind readers that despite monuments’ gestures towards permanence, they remain mortal objects whose embedded risk of destruction or defacement “may be the most meaningful aspect of the monument’s existence as an object.”²⁵ “[When] monumental discourse turns iconoclastic, it engages the objecthood of the monument at its core.”²⁶

Jas Elsner’s chapter in Nelson and Olin’s book examines the materiality of the monument as the substrate for a very specific semiotics of memory, made possible

²³ Stubblefield, “Iconoclasm beyond negation,” 2017.

²⁴ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 255.

²⁵ Nelson and Olin eds., *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*, 205.

²⁶ Nelson and Olin eds., *Monuments and Memory, Made and Unmade*, 205.

through destruction. Balancing between the analytic frameworks forged by anthropologists on the one hand and historians on the other, Elsner pursues an analysis of Roman *damnatio memoriae* which highlights the socially discursive role of the monument in public space. Reconfigured to foreground the collective production of meaning through spatial practice, iconoclastic acts of destruction may now be understood as one of several conceivable and well-used gestures within Roman public culture. Under these terms, “defacement was not just a performance of forgetting the previously remembered image; it was also a public act of noting the fact that someone grand enough to have once been commemorated was now ‘forgotten.’”²⁷ This “active, purposeful, and collectively performed” form of forgetting—or silencing, perhaps—would then in fact be counterintuitively *generative* of a different mode or form meaning, rather than exclusively its antithesis.

The context of violent conflict surrounding sites of heritage serves to highlight the discipline’s general lack of fluency in addressing contemporary cultural difference. Hugh Eakin’s 2016 article on the destruction of ancient Syrian sites calls out international preservation organizations for being so thoroughly “held hostage by politics” as to appear genuinely unconcerned with both helping locals and helping locals support preservation efforts.²⁸ “It is recognized,” John Daniel Giblin adds, “that all post-conflict international and national policies are inevitably problematic because they unavoidably script some groups as victims, some as perpetrators, some as pre-

²⁷ Elsner, “Iconoclasm and the Preservation of Memory,” 211.

²⁸ Eakin, “Ancient Syrian Sites,” 2016.

eminent and others as subsidiary.”²⁹ How can preservation efforts ever avoid replication of power disparities?

The reframing of heritage as a lived process rather than an inert object of concern has repositioned wartime protections for monuments beyond risk management models towards more generative understandings of conflict. While Cornelius Holtorf controversially suggests that cultural heritage may not ever be truly “at risk,” preservationist practice has often become defined by this very threat.³⁰ Can we exit embedded valorizations of rarity? The lie of objective neutrality cannot withstand and has never withstood iconoclasm—therein lies iconoclasm’s power. The calculated destruction of heritage instead uncomfortably reveals the heritage field’s unspoken allegiance to loss as its implicit *raison d’être*.

ON SPATIAL JUSTICE

Spatial dimensions of social justice emerged as an academic concern in the 1970s through the work of radical/critical geographers, most notably that of David Harvey³¹ and Edward Soja.³² Taking as fundamental Henri Lefebvre’s³³ assertions that society and its spaces are mutually formative, “the right to the city” is understood inherently as a function of relationships distributed geographically in urban space. Harvey has summarized his reading of the right to the city as:

The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover,

²⁹ Giblin, “Post-conflict Heritage,” 2014.

³⁰ Holtorf, “Heritage is not ‘at risk,’” 2016.

³¹ Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, 1973.

³² Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 2010.

³³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1991(1968).

a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is...one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.³⁴

Lefebvre's work arose out of mid-20th century French Marxism, developing via studies of the 1871 Paris Commune which were informed by notable collaborations with the artists and social thinkers of the Situationist International. His book *Le Droit à la ville* was published prior to the student occupations and general strikes in Paris in May of 1968, upon which his notions of everyday life were deeply influential.

A Marxist and a sociologist, Lefebvre's work complicates Marx's dialectic of material production and superstructural power by introducing space as a more dynamic unit of socio-political analysis. Consisting of a tripartite engine of relationships broadly composing collective practices, built frameworks, and embedded meanings, the 'production of space' provides a theory of change that Lefebvre elaborates with the aim to choreograph viable routes to a people's socialist revolution. If the capitalist system maintains power via control over the space through which it is reproduced, it is that very space that must be commandeered.

[The] state defends class interests while simultaneously setting itself above society as a whole, and its ability to intervene in space can and must be turned back against it, by grass-roots opposition, in the form of counter-plans and counter-projects designed to thwart strategies, plans and programmes imposed from above.³⁵

³⁴ Harvey, "The Right to the City," 2008.

³⁵ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 383.

The everyday presents the space of opportunity to oppose power because such is the time and space at which power meets that which it cannot entirely control, with its limits.

David Harvey, Edward Soja and Don Mitchell have each seized upon Lefebvre's ideas, applying them anew to the social and political transformations in the United States between the 1970s and the present. Harvey's work affirms the position that geography is never neutral in the face of urban resource distribution, and has further developed a series of deeply influential, materialist critiques of late-capitalism in which he identifies the market's annihilation of space as a necessary pretext for its own reproduction.

Soja's work theorizes the notion of spatial justice most directly, seeking to make Lefebvre's ideas comprehensively applicable and actionable within the unique urban context of Los Angeles. In *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Soja argues for the real and conceptual benefits of employing space as an analytic category, both as a tool for coalition building and towards the creative development of new strategies for pursuing justice.³⁶ Spatial justice understands space as a categorical set of material and ideological relations, which, while composed through a constitutive set of social relations, also contributes to the reproduction and naturalization of the social dimension, thus having an important causal effect on conditions of justice or injustice.

Geographer Don Mitchell takes up Lefebvre's contention that the city is an *oeuvre* in which all city dwellers participate, developing the concept of spatial justice with

³⁶ Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, 2010.

particular focus on public space.³⁷ Exploring the crisis of urban homelessness and the legal debates which have produced the parameters for free speech and public assembly, Mitchell argues for the geographic imperative of claiming space—to seize it for its representational and/or use values—*in order to produce it as public*. From a social historical perspective, justice is necessarily claimed spatially in order to force its registration as ‘rights,’ per se.

Whether pursued through the perspective of spatial *distributions*—prioritizing questions of access to resources—or rather via spatially equitable *representations*—concerning the identities of decision-making agents and the perpetuation of practices through which socio-spatial relations are reproduced—spatial justice is an invaluable category through which to apprehend the parameters and practices which together compose conditions of inequity.

ON CRITICAL HERITAGE & ITS POLITICS

The sub-field of Critical Heritage Studies, building upon the work of critical theory and its wide-ranging influences upon the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology and new museology, has been increasingly vocal in asking researchers throughout the heritage fields to “vigorously question the conservative cultural and economic power relations that outdated understandings of heritage seem to underpin.”³⁸ For whom do preservationists practice? Who suffers from the losses against which we defend?

³⁷ Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 2003.

³⁸ Association of Critical Heritage Studies Manifesto, 2011.

To these ends, Laurajane Smith's *Uses of Heritage*, written in 2006, has been particularly instructive.³⁹ With a background in cultural and archaeological heritage, Smith brings to light the relationships that are encoded within and reproduced through the activities and transactions of preserving the material past. One of Smith's primary contributions has been to develop the notion of "Authorized Heritage Discourse" (AHD). A professional ethic and set of practices codified by the cumulative work of the professionalization of the heritage fields, the AHD is currently defined by professional charters, international standards and varying contexts of law. These standards have become hegemonic insofar as they "promote a certain set of Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable" while simultaneously undermining "alternative and subaltern ideas about 'heritage,'" thereby obscuring "the 'work' that 'heritage' 'does' as a social and cultural practice."⁴⁰ The effect is to naturalize as a scientific given that which is meaningfully constructed as heritage.

Emerging initially out of an elite nostalgia for aestheticized prior eras of country estates and aristocratic luxury, much of the AHD and its perpetuation is thoroughly steeped in traditions to honor historical relationships of power. In her discussion of "responses" or challenges to iterations of AHD, Smith traces indigenous demands for the repatriation of human remains and aboriginal material culture against the archaeological institutions at the helm of cultural heritage management. Smith frames these negotiations as the beginnings of a comprehensive postcolonial critique for the

³⁹ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 2006.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 11.

heritage fields, a debate that is inextricably premised upon Enlightenment understandings of scientific versus spiritual systems of knowledge.

By defining the debate...as a conflict between science and religion, the cultural values of science are immediately obscured and the debate is defined as one of 'truth' against 'faith' or 'reason' against 'irrationality'. This is important because it obscures the power and authority that 'rational', 'informed' or 'intellectual' knowledge about 'heritage' has and the role that it plays in defining identity and collective memory. Intellectual or expert knowledge about heritage becomes authorized and authoritative due to its appeals to universal applicability; and 'other' forms of knowledge about the nature and meaning of heritage become simply that – 'other' and marginal as the self-interested special pleadings of minority groups.⁴¹

The consequences of the AHD upon communities which are fundamentally disempowered by the discourse—namely those of indigenous peoples whose understandings of the past and cultural practices of remembrance do not fit into AHD frameworks—are significant. Heritage is a political tool insofar as it captures places and objects of diverse cultural understandings into functionally and ideologically rigid regimes of control and legitimacy, which are directly beholden to the language of law. In this process, fundamental cultural differences about the meaning and nature of the past are radically de-valued and most often entirely obscured.

Rodney Harrison further articulates the political implications of the heritage discourse championed by Smith in a compilation of studies he has edited and contributed to entitled *Understanding the Politics of Heritage*.⁴² Part of a three volume series composed through Open University called *Understanding Global Heritage*, these studies seek to chart a new approach to heritage management practice within a

⁴¹ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 280.

⁴² Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 2009.

discourse that has been increasingly transformed by the language of globalization and postcolonial theory. Primary to these initiatives is a project of establishing and instrumentalizing a basic respect for cultural difference within regimes of heritage management practice.

Harrison contends that “the power to control heritage is the power to remake the past in a way that facilitates certain actions or viewpoints in the present.”⁴³ The case of the Taliban’s destruction of the faces of the Bamiyan Buddhas provides a useful reflection upon the nature of iconoclastic acts from a critical heritage perspective. As a process by which people acknowledge particular connections between objects, places, practices and collective memory, iconoclasm “is not only a destructive process but a process by which an attempt is made to clear the way for the creation of new collective memory.”⁴⁴ While iconoclasm is easy to view as purely negative, Harrison asserts that we also need to think of it as a form of value-assessment. The difficulty, Harrison makes sure to emphasize, “lies in understanding the motivations of such actions, and their impact on living religious and cultural expressions.”⁴⁵ Events such as these are not merely obstacles to heritage conservation, but opportunities for heritage professionals both to better understand and perhaps also to mitigate events of cultural conflict involving sites or objects of historic value.

⁴³ Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 154.

⁴⁴ Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 165.

⁴⁵ Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 165.

Rodney Harrison and Lotte Hughes provide a concise narrative of the genesis of 'culture' through the social scientific understandings of difference which were developed in tandem with colonial campaigns of domination in their chapter entitled "Heritage, colonialism and postcolonialism."⁴⁶ Anthropology and archaeology were born out of the desire to classify and thereby control the nations of people brought under territorial colonial rule. By composing teleological models for the advancement of organized civilization that placed Eurocentric models at the apex, notions of cultural difference were initially defined by the project of legitimizing the superior capacities of colonizers to rule.

The heritage discourse is in many ways the inheritor of these disciplines and their scientifically rationalized technologies of classification and control. The development of postcolonial discourses, therefore, has a wealth of implications for heritage as it has for so many social sciences. The authors locate the theme of identity as the primary area "in which postcolonial literatures overlap with and inform heritage studies."⁴⁷ The case study developed in this chapter juxtaposes initiatives at the National Museums of Kenya to present a unified national narrative which avoids reference to "contested aspects of history" with community-led, cultural resource centers and "Peace Museums," which aim instead "to use 'traditional' methods to achieve social healing and reconciliation... [such as] planting peace trees and holding earth-cleansing ceremonies."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 234.

⁴⁷ Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 238.

⁴⁸ Harrison, ed., *Politics of Heritage*, 248.

Dean Sully carries many of these points into the realms of conservation practice through his experience in a community project to preserve a Maori meeting house that had been transported to England in 1892 by William Hillier Onslow, as a souvenir of his time as governor of New Zealand. Brought to life in his text *Decolonising Conservation*,⁴⁹ this event serves to demonstrate and support Sully's theorization of a "people-based" conservation practice. With a theoretical premise in post-colonial theories that are in line with those discussed by Harrison, Sully defines the process of decolonization in heritage studies as "a self-conscious attempt to reveal the voices that lie hidden within the monuments, archives, and artifacts that have been used in the West to objectify our relationships with the past."⁵⁰ Insofar as the "consequences of the imbalance of power in past [heritage] relationships impacts on how present relationships become possible futures," Sully's project is one of intentional and practical restructuring in order to place the knowledge and needs of user communities in a place of greater functional significance than that of abstract historical expertise.⁵¹

By instead putting expert and scientific knowledge to use for the communities most closely identified with a site of heritage, Sully's methods seek to forge realistic and realizable connections between the professional communities involved in conservation and a site's more diverse range of stakeholders. Integral to this reordering, Sully retains a commitment to materiality as a potential locus for new relationships: "...although meaning may be contingently constructed, it is defined by

⁴⁹ Sully, *Decolonising Conservation*, 2007.

⁵⁰ Sully, *Decolonising Conservation*, 19.

⁵¹ Sully, *Decolonising Conservation*, 20.

the material character of the object, which provides opportunities and constraints to human agency.”⁵²

Within museology, Moira Simpson provides a succinct summary of disciplinary shifts that have occurred as a result of the postcolonial struggles for indigenous cultural entitlement, demonstrated most profoundly in the debates surrounding the repatriation of cultural objects to their region and communities of origin. To these transformations in academic practice and discourse, Simpson adds the dimension of persistent patterns of poor physical and psychological health within indigenous communities that have increasingly been linked to cultural traumas associated with colonization. Further evidence exists that “greater self-governance, self-determination and cultural renewal have a positive effect on the lives of indigenous peoples who have been enduring the effects of historic or post-colonial trauma.”⁵³

Simpson makes a strong case for the participation of modern museums and their collections in the intercultural collaborative processes to strengthen indigenous traditions and trajectories towards cultural revival. The repatriation of movable heritage objects has been demonstrated to facilitate the revitalization of traditional cultural practices by returning to communities their means for transferring ancestral knowledge and collective practices to younger generations. Insofar as the return of ceremonial objects can “contribute to community healing as part of contemporary life, then the act of repatriation is surely the ultimate form of cultural preservation.”⁵⁴

⁵² Sully, *Decolonising Conservation*, 41.

⁵³ Simpson, “Museums and Restorative Justice,” 123.

⁵⁴ Simpson, “Museums and Restorative Justice,” 128-9.

Is heritage a human right? Indeed, Lynne Meskell establishes that a rights-modeled discourse succeeds “to leverage power in arenas of political debate.”⁸ To what ends, however, remains the more evaluative question. Do the material and immaterial traces of cultural life warrant the same protections as cultural lives lived? Ian Hodder has critiqued the rights discourse for its binary and adversarial qualities, though allowed praise insofar as it can expose and underscore our responsibilities towards one another both as humans and as fundamentally people-centered professionals.⁹ Alas, Helaine Silverman and David Ruggles also acknowledge the limitations inherent to the unavoidably political arbitration of heritage sites. In seeking justice, “[m]inority communities within nation states, whether in repressive regimes or democratic republics, are left in a paradoxical situation: when they are at odds with the agenda of the nation, they are forced to seek mediation and redress from the very entity, that is, their adversary.”⁵⁵ Equity is elemental to agency, yet representation also entails control.

In her 2014 article for *Heritage & Society*, Melissa Baird delves into the literature on rights-talk as a tool for the preservation of the heritage of marginalized or disenfranchised groups, favoring a model which instead prioritizes the language of justice. Where human rights instruments, in her view, suffer from the burden of overuse, with effects limited by the high threshold of their claims, a social justice framework can instead approach more comprehensive understandings of the processes through which inequalities are systematically reproduced. Complementary

⁵⁵ Silverman and Ruggles, “Cultural Heritage and Human Rights,” 7.

to rather than mutually exclusive of rights-based approaches, the models for heritage approaches for which Baird advocates require thinking about the “performative nature of heritage—its routines, regulations, practices, and discourses,” as a strategic subject of analysis, understanding the official practices of bureaucracies as “comprised of individuals with competing interests, motivations, and goals.”⁵⁶

Not unlike systems-thinking approaches, a social justice framework endeavors to locate heritage within local and trans-local fields of power. The practical benefits of Baird’s justice-oriented approach to heritage includes an integrated range of disciplinary expertise, the results of which can be mobilized to wider effect than prior models. “By developing counter discourses and counter-hegemonic practices, social justice frameworks seek to move beyond descriptions of inequalities and, instead, to build strategies that understand local, situated contexts.”⁵⁷

Laurajane Smith has mobilized Nancy Fraser’s⁵⁸ theories of recognition in the pursuit of social justice.⁵⁹ Insofar as “recognition is about identifying the ‘social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication’ that lead to cultural injustice,” heritage work is deeply implicated in the perpetuation of these patterns.⁶⁰ Smith examines archaeological discourse as a language and mechanism of control over the ways that indigenous knowledge is captured and mobilized by heritage professionals, and Australia’s AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous

⁵⁶ Baird, “Heritage, Human Rights, and Social Justice,” 149.

⁵⁷ Baird, “Heritage, Human Rights, and Social Justice,” 149.

⁵⁸ Fraser, “Redistribution to Recognition,” 1995.

⁵⁹ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 2010.

⁶⁰ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 62.

Studies as an attempt to better involve indigenous communities in the creation of this knowledge-capture.

Building upon the claims of her earlier research, Smith reminds readers of the role that heritage plays in the governance of populations, and the risks of misrecognition and political disenfranchisement that are thus inherently involved. Insofar as heritage management is inherently contested, Smith further reminds us of her earlier assertion that “conflicts are heritage...heritage is not only about the mediation of cultural and social conflicts, but [it] is ultimately about the mediation of cultural change.”⁶¹

Disciplines such as archaeology, which make both historical and contemporary claims to scientific rationality, become taken up as technologies of government by making populations and social problems not only ‘think-able’ but also subject to regulation and resolution through the disciplined analysis of rational thought.⁶²

Smith uses Fraser’s frameworks to assert that, by coming to better understandings of the “layers of politics that underpin the use of knowledge and the discourses that frame that knowledge,” researchers are better able to navigate increasing demands for democratization.⁶³ To acknowledge how professional practices of heritage function as resources for various forms of social and political power “reveals the multiple layers of overt and covert consequence that expert discourses can have” and the ways that these practices reproduce and redeploy such “resources of power and privilege” with

⁶¹ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 64.

⁶² Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 65.

⁶³ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 66.

considerable “implications for recognition and representation and ultimately social justice.”⁶⁴

Central to her argument, however, is that in order for recognition and redistribution to become fully achievable, experts in positions of power must first come to recognize their own identities and activities as those of control, and therefore of a certain responsibility towards inclusion. “[A]ny recognition of identity and justice requires a corresponding self-recognition or acknowledgment and a corresponding rethinking of expert identity and the discourses that maintained those identities.”⁶⁵

While recognition and representation are key improvements for heritage discourse and especially in formalized policy, heritage researchers must “rethink not only practice, but also what is being researched and why. That is, they require a rethinking of the discourses that are used to frame research and the identities of ‘expertise.’”⁶⁶

As custodians of material and cultural heritage, the conservation fields are in an important position of mediating the public’s interaction with symbols of power. Issues of rights in the context of heritage have been hotly debated, to varying conclusions about the utility of the rights vocabulary to the pursuit of equity in heritage. Similar questions have been posed by radical geographers about concerns over spatial justice. At their core, all of these debates circle back to issues of representation.

Andreas Huyssen has suggested that our fascination with the past should be taken seriously “as an attempt, however fragile and fraught with contradiction, to cast

⁶⁴ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 66.

⁶⁵ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 67.

⁶⁶ Smith, “Ethics or Social Justice,” 67.

lifelines to the past and counteract our culture's undisputed tendency toward amnesia under the sign of immediate profit and short-term politics."⁶⁷ This casting of lifelines must be more reflexively developed and strategically employed. If an interpretation of history can be properly leveraged towards collective goals by valorizing complexity and popularizing far-seeing models of change, there is indeed important work for historic preservationists towards the design and construction of a more just society. Materiality is an instrument but not an end.

⁶⁷ Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 254.

CHAPTER THREE

Re-building with Dynamite: Iconoclastic Recollections of Haymarket Square

On the evening of May 4, 1886, workers assembled in Chicago's Haymarket Square to demonstrate in support of the international movement for an eight-hour workday, yet their claims would soon be obscured by a stick of dynamite which was tossed into the line of policemen who had assembled to disperse the crowd. The explosion ripped through Officer Mathias J. Degan, and the other officers who remained standing opened fire indiscriminately upon the crowd of otherwise peaceful protesters. Eight of Chicago's most vocal anarchists at the time were tried and convicted of conspiracy for their purported connection to the event, although no evidence was presented at trial to substantiate their presence at the gathering or participation in its violent unfolding. In 1887, four were executed: August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer and George Engel. Two years later, the city dedicated a nine-foot bronze statue of a policeman with his arm raised in the center of Haymarket Square. "In the name of the People of Illinois, I command Peace," read the pedestal's inscription.

What follows is a narrative of official forgettings and critical remembrances. The events which transpired that evening in May, once paired with an exclusive narrative of lawful sacrifice to mark the space of complex public tragedy, would together catalyze over a century of argumentation about the representation of political power and its

sanctioned use of force. Refracted and redeployed through the logics of changing social and political agendas, memorial commemorations of the event, heretofore remembered as the Haymarket Riot or the Haymarket Affair, have repeatedly been revived in public memory due to the visible refusals of subsequent generations to submit to an official narrative's selective representation. This chapter will examine the discursive transformations produced by unauthorized alterations of an official, material omission.

Through a combination of archival research and discourse analysis, this chapter traces key moments of symbolic and spatial argumentation over the representation of police power in Chicago between 1889 and 2004. While many art and political historians have considered the implications of this particular contested space from their respective disciplinary perspectives,⁶⁸ few have examined these transformations through the lens of historic preservation or built heritage studies.

Building upon Michel-Rolph Trouillot's argument that certain historical narratives are 'silenced,' while others are granted greater voice, this chapter follows Trouillot's intention to track the influence of power through a critical reading of multivalent and ongoing historical productions. By reconnecting the material and textual survivors of time to the agendas to which they provided instrumental support, history can be denaturalized from its unique narrative origins in time and place.

⁶⁸ Such as in Kanouse, "Performing Haymarket," 2008; Sommer and Forley, "Dyn-o-mite Fiends," 2008; Lampert, *A People's Art History of the United States*, 2013; and McGeough, Palczewski and Lake, "Oppositional Memory Practices," 2015.

To these ends, art historian Nicholas Lampert's attention to both official and unauthorized voices surrounding memorials to the Haymarket Affair, detailed in *A People's Art History of the United States*, have been particularly instructive.⁶⁹ By taking up Lampert's framework in which artistic representations of the past function towards explicit political imperatives, this chapter identifies a plurality of mnemonic actors with uneven influence over what would become codified as official heritage representations—but which must nevertheless still be understood to contribute significantly to the social significance of these contentious sites.

Campaigns of architectural and totemic destruction have been well documented as strategies for cultural erasure,⁷⁰ but the creation of certain monuments by those in positions of power can equally be an act of historical censorship. When a historical production renders certain dimensions of a given narrative silent—whether through representational absence or incommensurate presence—some forms of material destruction may have the counterintuitive effect to introduce new voices and create renewed opportunities for relevance. By juxtaposing the works of anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot and art historian Thomas Stubblefield against the backdrop of the Haymarket Police Memorial in Chicago, IL, this chapter's analysis contends that some instances of critical, spatial intervention by unauthorized mnemonic actors at spaces of selective commemoration can in fact reveal more than they may be feared to erase.

⁶⁹ Lampert, "Haymarket: An Embattled History of Static Monuments and Public Interventions," 2013.

⁷⁰ Such as in Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory*, 2006.

Finally, the case of Haymarket demonstrates the interplay between the political impulse to produce ‘calm’—to establish stability—and the public outcry of refusal to be forgotten. When, though visible contestations, the effects of power become inscribed upon these sites of memory, what responsibility does the ethical (i.e. justice-minded) preservationist have to retain and interpret the legacies of these struggles themselves? Having found new resolution in 2004 in a monument whose representation and interpretive content strives for depoliticized narrative equity, this chapter’s conclusion considers the task of making historical and commemorative conflict visible. While a depth of archival text exists online to add a layered, though dislocated interpretive value to a site which at long last makes an attempt to mark a complicated event of violence in the space in which it occurred, the political struggles waged through time have nevertheless been newly obscured by a flattened representation, precluding questions of power.

CREATING SILENCE

What began as a labor demonstration ended in bloodshed: one officer was killed instantly in the dynamite explosion, and at least six demonstrators were gunned down by police that night in 1886. Seven other policemen would ultimately die of their wounds, and an unknown number of workers were wounded. Yet the only image to honor this fraught night in the space where these events transpired would be that of a policeman with his hand raised.

Sculpted by Danish artist Johannes Gelert, the monument is alternately referenced as the Haymarket Riot Monument, the Haymarket Police Memorial, or an

alternative combination thereof. Funded by an influential group of businessmen called the Union League Club of Chicago, the statue was unveiled by the son of the officer who had been killed in the blast on May 30, 1889. No other memorial to the event would be permitted within the city limits.⁷¹



Image 03: The Police Monument in its original location at the center of Randolph Street, just west of Desplaines, pictured soon after its dedication in 1889. Source: *ChicagoNow*

While the actual command spoken to dissolve the crowd that night is predictably disputed, the intended effect of the composition is clear. In an era defined by rapidly changing, industrialized labor patterns and increasingly centralized forms of

⁷¹ Lampert, "An Embattled History," 73.

capital accumulation, the image of the policeman was designed to remind a rising tide of political dissenters that the state would maintain its monopoly on the legitimate use of force.⁷²

The commemorative gesture of the police monument falls squarely into the category of what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has theorized as an act of “silencing” history.⁷³ Entering the process of historical production at “the moment of retrospective significance”—yet early enough in the event’s wake to become dangerously synonymous with “the moment of fact creation”—the policeman’s commanding figure was designed as a gesture of selective forgetting, intended to control the event’s remembrance by giving commemorative presence to only one dimension of the narrative.⁷⁴ The purpose of the demonstration, its working class participants, and the ambiguity of the altercation that evening would be ignored in service of an official narrative of police sacrifice in the name of peace.

As a heuristic device, Trouillot’s attention to the production of historical silence allows him to track the influence of power in the creation of historical narrative—denaturalizing the material and textual survivors of time by re-connecting them to the agendas to which they provided instrumental support, each located uniquely in cultural and socio-political time and place. “Power does not enter the story once and for all, but at different times and from different angles. It precedes the narrative proper, contributes to its creation and to its interpretation.”⁷⁵

⁷² As used by Max Weber in “Politics as a Vocation,” 1919.

⁷³ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, 1995

⁷⁴ Trouillot, *Silencing*, 26

⁷⁵ Trouillot, *Silencing*, 29

Trouillot furthermore parses history's diverse range of productive agents from their equally plural media of delivery in order to decenter the debate out of academic standards for historical truth, instead submitting to analysis those more quotidian capacities with rather more significant popular currency. "Long before average citizens read the historians who set the standards of the day...they access history through celebrations, site and museum visits, movies, national holidays, and primary school books."⁷⁶ More specifically, it is often precisely the materiality of the socio-historical process which "sets the stage for future historical narratives...The bigger the material mass, the more easily it entraps us."⁷⁷

This analytic attention to the role of *materiality* within the production of history, as Trouillot would no doubt agree, might be expanded further to an analysis of *place*, and to the reproduction of spatial relationships therein. Another monument was erected in 1893 to honor the four "Haymarket Martyrs"—as they would thence be referenced by those who maintained that their execution had been for no just cause beyond their expressed political dissent—but its location marks their grave sites approximately eight and a half miles to the west of the Haymarket, beyond Chicago's city limits, in what is now Forest Home Cemetery. The image of the policeman and his inscribed message of peace would maintain its claim to the site of violence with its exclusive narrative of power.

⁷⁶ Trouillot, *Silencing*, 20

⁷⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing*, 29



Image 04: Haymarket Square, c. 1898. Source: *Library of Congress*

REFRAMING ICONOCLASM

However, the policeman statue's spatial dominance in Haymarket Square would not go unrebuked for long. Sustaining smaller acts of vandalism from day one, the statue had been relocated and ornamental pieces recast by the turn of the 20th century. After the statue's relocation one mile west to Randolph Street and Ogden Avenue near Union Park, a streetcar driver directed his coach into the monument's commanding stature on May 4, 1927, the 41st anniversary of the Haymarket tragedy. Traffic patterns may have enabled the collision, but the driver's expressed motivation was that he was

“sick of seeing that policeman with his arm raised.”⁷⁸ The city repaired the statue within a year and relocated it further out of the way into Union Park.

Haymarket Square would fall out of use as the bustling economic hub it had been at the end of the 19th century, as changing needs for urban space and consumption practices would redefine mid-20th-century cities throughout the US. Between the 1930s and 1950s, the boom for highway infrastructure projects and later campaigns for urban renewal would radically transform the flow of people throughout the urban landscape, and Chicago’s Kennedy Expressway project would slice directly through the core of what had been Haymarket Square. The police statue was moved several more times to accommodate these projects, but by 1957 it had been re-installed not far from its original location on Randolph Street, perched at the street’s crossing over the newly excavated expressway below.

Yet the national political moment of the late 1960s provided a new source of collective opposition to the policeman’s authoritarian image. The war in Vietnam helped to crystallize a mass imaginary of resistance from an increasingly radicalized generation of young people, as images of the war’s brutality proliferated alongside those of violent police repression at Civil Rights demonstrations. Representations of state violence reached into every household and college campus through the swiftly expanding media of televised moving image.

The statue of the policeman was vandalized with black paint on May 4, 1968 on the 82nd anniversary of the Haymarket affair, following a protest against the Vietnam

⁷⁸ Adelman, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, 38.

War. On October 6, 1969, the statue was destroyed by a bomb placed between its legs, shattering windows throughout the neighborhood and scattering pieces of the statue across the Kennedy Expressway below. Credit for the incident was claimed by the increasingly militarized group of activists who called themselves the Weatherman. The act was meant as an explosive start to the "Days of Rage" protests, which were intended to "bring the war home."⁷⁹



Images 04 & 05: "Days of Rage" protests, 1969. Source: *Associated Press*

⁷⁹ Sommer and Forley, "Dyn-O-Mite Fiends," 17.

The statue was recast and unveiled on May 4, 1970, only to be blown up again that October. Rebuilt once again, Mayor Richard J. Daley then posted a 24-hour police guard at the site. The statue's private security system reportedly cost \$67,440 of public tax dollars for its year-long duration.⁸⁰ In 1972, the police statue was at last moved out of public view to the lobby of the Central Police Headquarters, and in 1976 it was erected at its current location in the enclosed courtyard of the Chicago Police Academy.



Image 06: "Fireman Looking Over Damage." Source: Getty Images

⁸⁰ Lampert, "An Embattled History," 77.

Between the first reported case of vandalism and the statue's eventual relocation behind the police department's proverbial home lines, the Haymarket Police Monument sustained at least 72 years of spatial contestation. The three most notable of these succeeded in dislodging the figure from its pedestal, rendering its pedestal vacant, even when only for interim periods of repair—1927, 1969 and 1970. It is in these instances that the notion of iconoclasm becomes an interesting lens for critical understanding.

Thomas Stubblefield has brought the concept of iconoclasm, or image-breaking, into an analysis of contemporary relevance through the context of the Islamic State's dramatic 2015 staging of the destruction of artifacts at the Mosul Museum.⁸¹ By placing the videos released by ISIS into a comparison with the US Army's own strikingly similar toppling dramaturgy at Saddam Hussein's likeness in 2003, Stubblefield asserts that practices of destroying symbols of power must firstly be divorced from their associative moral polarities—whether they be vandals or extremists—before being closely re-examined for the unique play of cultural and technological media through which the event is delivered to its intended audience. Whose destructive actions are presumed legitimate, and by what measure?

A planned act of destruction, especially undertaken as an element of grander-scale organized political critique, is likely intended to disrupt certain narratives. But is the effect always one of erasure? Stubblefield contends that the argumentation involved in the iconoclastic gesture is in fact quite a bit more complicated. Through the

⁸¹ Stubblefield, "Iconoclasm beyond Negation," 2016.

digital proliferation of secondary representations of the destructive event, “the commemorative function of the monument...proves capable of working through a reversal of presence whereby disappearance no longer proves synonymous with forgetting or loss, but rather forms the condition of possibility for a specific mode of image production.”⁸² Iconoclastic acts seize upon the signifying power of the monument by re-deploying it through its absence—or “(negative) presence”—and by this gesture such imaged acts of destruction may be in fact productive of new capacities, both representational and spatial.

When the decision was made to permanently relocate the thrice reconstructed monument safely beyond prominent public view or access, the empty pedestal remained on Randolph Street for another thirty years. While uninformed visitors might not have known the storied significance of the site, it was nevertheless adopted by artists and anarchists to remember the struggles themselves as part of an incomplete and unending process, never to be abandoned under the pretension of triumph in material permanence.⁸³

In 1996, artist and activist Kehben Grifter of the Beehive Design Collective and Evan Glassman created mosaics that honored the anarchists who were executed for their involvement in the Haymarket Affair, installing them in the freshly repaved cement sidewalks near the Haymarket site without the city’s official permission (Figure 7).⁸⁴ Through a combination of good luck and unaware city agencies, the mosaics remained

⁸² Stubblefield, “Iconoclasm,” 2.

⁸³ Kanouse, “Performing Haymarket.”

⁸⁴ Lampert, “An Embattled History,” 77.

in place for five weeks until an article in the *Chicago Tribune* brought publicity to their illicit installation.



Image 07: Mosaic artwork by Kehben Grifter and Evan Glassman. Source: Lampert 2013

Image 08: Set for Michael Piazza's 2002 "Haymarket Eight-Hour Action Series." Source: Lampert 2013

In preparation for the 1996 Democratic National Convention, the city finally removed the empty pedestal from the Haymarket, perhaps in recognition of its potential to provide a space for protest. "To many, the removal of the pedestal was a great loss, for it represented just how contested the history of the Police Monument had been, and it had served as a grand stage for performances and other public interventions."⁸⁵ Yet even the eighteen-foot circle of discolored sidewalk space which marked where the pedestal had been was soon seized as a new stage. In 2002, Chicago artist Michael Piazza put the circle to use for his "Haymarket Eight-Hour Action Series" (Figure 8).⁸⁶

When Stubblefield's notion of signifying through reversals of presence is paired with Trouillot's attention to erasure by narrative absence, the capacity is revealed for

⁸⁵ Lampert, "An Embattled History," 77-78.

⁸⁶ Lampert, "An Embattled History," 78.

certain critical acts of destruction to produce new space for narratives of resistance, previously precluded by a monument's one-dimensional presence. A double negative, so to speak, to create the conditions for more spatially equitable representation and contribute to the relative legitimacy of a more comprehensive historical narrative.

EVEN-TONED AFTERLIVES

An act of destruction may serve to transform a site of authoritative commemoration into an open vessel for polyvalent or contradictory practices of remembrance, but those in positions of power generally prefer not to leave a historical narrative up to unguided public interpretation. At Haymarket, three camps have struggled over the commemorative representation of the 1886 event for well over a century: anarchists, city officials, and labor historians. The latter group of union leaders and labor historians look to the event as a significant turning point in the international struggle for the eight-hour work day, choosing to distance themselves from the more radical political dissidents of the anarchist organizers who were executed for their connection to the event. As artist Nicolas Lampert recounts in his "Embattled History" of the Haymarket Affair's manifold commemorations, anarchist organizers August Spies, Albert Parsons, and others had "agitated for a collective society to replace capitalism and private property; they viewed the U.S. government as a hostile entity that perpetuated a society based on inequality and a class system."⁸⁷ Their calls for radical social and political restructuring ran counter to the goals of the modern labor

⁸⁷ Lampert, "An Embattled History," 73.

movement, which instead organized for incremental reforms such as higher wages and safer working conditions.

While the 20th-century anarchist perspective may have preferred the open space of active interpretation, the Illinois Labor History Society (ILHS) had lobbied tirelessly to stake a claim to the narrative of worker rights through the creation of an official marker at the site of the speaker's wagon in 1886 on Desplaines Street. Having originally formed as the Haymarket Workers Memorial Committee in 1969, the ILHS under the leadership of Leslie Orear soon expanded their cause to labor history more broadly, but never gave up on their founding charge to commemorate the world-famous but locally invisible event. "I've been told that people have come to the site and simply broken down into tears when they found there was absolutely no demarcation there," Orear would later testify to the city; "People come from all over the world to the site in awe, like it is a holy place."⁸⁸

Inspired by the organization of commemorative events to mark the centennial of the tragedy in 1986, the new Chicago mayor Harold Washington—elected in 1983 as the city's first black mayor—issued a proclamation honoring May 4, 1886 as the start of the "movement towards the eight-hour day, union rights, civil rights, human rights," adding that the execution of the four anarchist leaders constituted a "tragic miscarriage of justice."⁸⁹ Washington agreed to support the idea of a Haymarket memorial park which had been put forth by the ILHS, but hopes for its realization were dashed when he passed away the following year.

⁸⁸ Huebner, *Haymarket Revisited*, paragraph 8.

⁸⁹ Green, *Death in the Haymarket*, 316.

In 1992, the Chicago City Council finally passed an ordinance conferring landmark status to the block of Desplaines Street between Randolph and Lake, but no further commemorative action was taken until 1996, when a small plaque was placed in the sidewalk near where the speakers' wagon had been located in 1886. The neutral inscription read:

A decade of strife between labor and industry culminated here in a confrontation that resulted in the tragic death of both workers and policemen. On May 4, 1886, spectators at a labor rally had gathered around the mouth of nearby Crane's Alley. A contingent of police approaching on Desplaines Street were met by a bomb thrown from just south of the alley. The resulting trial of eight activists gained worldwide attention for the labor movement and initiated the tradition of "May Day" labor rallies in many cities.⁹⁰

The plaque received flowers from visitors, who would tie strings and bows of remembrance to a nearby chain-link fence. This plaque was removed when the new memorial was installed at the site.

On September 14, 2004, Mayor Daley and union leaders—including the president of Chicago's police union—together dedicated a monument by Chicago artist Mary Brogger. The imagery depicts featureless figures cast in red bronze atop a wagon referencing that which was used by speakers at the rally in 1886, although their gestures are intentionally ambiguous.

I was pretty adamant in my own mind that it would not be useful to depict violence," Ms. Brogger said. "The violence didn't seem important, because this event was made up of much bigger ideas than one particular incident. I didn't want to make the imagery conclusive. I want to suggest the complexity of truth, but also people's responsibility for their actions and for the effect of their

⁹⁰ Chicago Historical Society, "The Dramas of Haymarket," Epilogue.

actions.⁹¹

With monument's base covered in plaques donated by labor organizations worldwide, the site today exists as an index for what are now somewhat less contentious notions: the eight-hour workday, the abstract value of free speech, and union-organized labor. Newly depoliticized, the site retains few if any original spatial features from the Haymarket Square of the late 19th century.



Image 09: Present-day view of the Haymarket Memorial, by artist Mary Brogger. Source: Jyoti Srivastava

While a series of battles over spatial representations of power may have played out in Chicago with dynamite, a wider war of evolving urban space still transpired in the slow bureaucracy of city planning and constituent compromise. By the time of the city's recognition of the site of the Haymarket Affair in the late 1980s, the square had

⁹¹ Kinzer, "In Chicago, an Ambiguous Memorial."

already been irreparably altered beyond recognition by mid-century projects of urban renewal. The boat to preserve the spatial experience of the historical moment had sailed long ago, but the last relic of the struggle over the site's remembrance was finally lost in 1996 when the city removed the policeman's empty pedestal. Whether we can understand the new monument to be success as a more equitable representation of history is entirely contingent upon how contemporary stakeholder publics decide to frame their goals for the event's remembrance.

Nicolas Lampert maintains that the attempt to make the 2004 Haymarket memorial appear objective is one of its greatest flaws.

While much has changed over the 120 years since Haymarket, we do not live in a society where class conflict is a thing of the past. If anything, the division between the haves and the have-nots has become increasingly pronounced, and the methods for marginalizing working-class people, unions, and social movements have become increasingly sophisticated. A monument can proclaim that Haymarket was about free speech, but that does not make it necessarily true.⁹²

By representing false consensus, the monument designed by Mary Brogger has once again succeeded in forgetting—or 'silencing'—the conflicts through which the historical events have been remembered and made meaningful since 1886.

CONCLUSIONS

Time shifts power and social aims, and so too do the spatial configurations of cities. By altering the spatial relations at Haymarket Square, the politics of the site's remembrance could be newly deployed, and an aesthetics of urban demarcation of

⁹² Lampert, "An Embattled History," 85.

public space called into question. It is this interplay between the political impulse to produce 'calm' and the public outcry of refusal to be silenced which becomes inscribed upon these sites of memory. Today these narratives exist online and are recalled by artists and anniversary celebrations. Yet the archive cannot play the same role as that of spatial representation. As custodians of history's inscriptions on our memorial landscapes, preservationists should endeavor to retain the legacies of these struggles rather than wipe them clean.

After each of the three events of breaking the image of police power, the spatial effect of the square or translocated space of commemoration was altered, the official narrative compromised—made to bend and accommodate a competing remembrance. The streetcar event in 1927 succeeded in changing the way the monument could be viewed as a result of its subsequent relocation. The explosive interventions in 1969 and 1970 provided a newly vacant platform for student demonstrations, punctuated by a brief but deeply ironic spectacle of a flesh-and-blood police guard, mandated to protect another version carried out in bronze. Through these critical interventions, a monument's inscription underwent a proverbial transformation from command to question: do I command peace?

By mobilizing Trouillot's heuristic to track the influence of power in the creation of historical silence at key points of entry, and by pairing this with Stubblefield's re-imagining of the traditional polarities between creation and destruction, my intention has been to explore how acts of unauthorized material subtraction might be pragmatically decoupled from connotations of vandalism in order to become ethically better understood as a critical mode of material and narrative argumentation. The act

of altering or destroying a material presence that is designed to erase the complexities of popular dissent may succeed to produce openings, but it cannot alone fill them anew. Substantive change in the name of justice must occur through more fundamental efforts of resource redistribution, yet our public narratives nevertheless participate through the images we consume and the spaces we inhabit. Each challenge requires brave critique and patient persistence in equal measure.

CHAPTER FOUR

False Fathers:

J. Marion Sims & the Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments and Markers

"Thousands of New Yorkers got involved in this process, and there's been an important conversation going on across the city," said Mayor de Blasio. "Reckoning with our collective histories is a complicated undertaking with no easy solution. Our approach will focus on adding detail and nuance to – instead of removing entirely – the representations of these histories. And we'll be taking a hard look at who has been left out and seeing where we can add new work to ensure our public spaces reflect the diversity and values of our great city."

- Mayor Bill de Blasio

On January 12, 2018, Mayor Bill de Blasio and the City of New York issued a report detailing a 90-day review of four monuments, brought to the city's attention the prior fall in the midst of mounting fervor about Confederate monuments across the United States. As the quote above encapsulates, the goal for this process was to better include the city's residents, both in decision-making as well as in ultimate physical representation in public space. Yet the Mayor and Commission's conclusions, expressed above, to favor "adding detail and nuance" over the removal of these chosen subjects of critical analysis, is indicative of a broader cultural aversion to material loss, especially with regard to items and spaces enthroned by age.

This chapter provides a close reading of the Review Commission's report and public proceedings with reference to the only monument recommended for relocation: a statue of J. Marion Sims, MD. A mid-19th century surgeon from North Carolina, Sims

is remembered for his contributions to gynecological surgery, and in New York City his legacy also includes the formation of the nation's first hospital exclusively for women.

Yet the most celebrated of Sims' achievements came at the cost of experiments carried out upon enslaved women without consent and without the use of anesthesia. Originally dedicated in Bryant Park in 1894, the bronze and granite memorial to Dr. Sims was relocated once in the 1930s, coming to rest at the eastern edge of Central Park at 103rd Street across from the New York Academy of Medicine. Despite a decade of lobbying for the statue's removal by the surrounding East Harlem community—a group comprised primarily of people of color—the Parks Department had repeatedly declined to honor their concerns.

While the Mayoral Advisory Commission's 2018 report presents a pointed recognition of public opinion by contrast, the tale of Dr. Sims' remembrance nevertheless remains one of material distortions to historical fact—of the commemorative capacity for public spaces to produce politically safeguarded accounts of history to the detriment of progressive readings of the past.

The first part of this chapter introduces Dr. Sims' career and the original campaign to etch his image into the built landscape of New York City. Part two discusses how Sims' legacy became transformed throughout the 20th century, despite the city's best efforts to defend a stable and uncomplicated narrative of the doctor's contributions to science. Mounting critical interventions at the monument by East Harlem residents, artists and activists, fueled by newer accounts of the medical field's problematic history of experimentation upon people of color, have eventually

succeeded in altering the site's meaning by leveraging history in public space to make pointed, future-oriented claims for social justice.

Part three delves into the NYC Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments and Markers, with attention to its explicit efforts to integrate public opinion into its recommendations. To place the process described in the report within a context of prior efforts to lobby for the Sims statue to be removed, a selection of public critiques and media coverage of the debate are also closely considered. By highlighting public intervention as a clear criterion for the city's consideration of a monument's continued relevance in public space, the Commission's report may have created new opportunities for the work of heritage in the pursuit of socio-spatial justice, though the degree to which it can be understood to approach its expressed objective of "historical reckoning" may only be measured in time.⁹³

PART ONE: THE DOCTOR IN BRONZE

James Marion Sims' medical career began in earnest after moving to Montgomery, Alabama from Lancaster, North Carolina with his wife in 1840. At the time, no formal, specialized training existed for women's health, so when Sims began practicing as a surgeon and gynecologist, it was largely without rigorous precedent.⁹⁴ Locating his practice in the heart of the American South at the height of its slave economy, Sims opened a Negro Hospital to aid plantation owners with their enslaved populations. Sims owned slaves himself.

⁹³ "Report to the City of New York," 2.

⁹⁴ Wall, "The Medical Ethics of," 348.

Accounts of the man's professional and ethical motivations differ dramatically, but beyond any measure of medical curiosity, it is clear that Sims also sought fame. His medical career, which he describes in detail in his posthumously published autobiography, was premised upon avid experimentation and publishing claims to pioneering and self-branded techniques.⁹⁵ In 1845 he claimed to have invented a cure for lockjaw via mechanical intervention into the skull plates of slave children with a shoemaker's awl—a condition which scientists would soon identify as being caused by the bacterial infection, tetanus.⁹⁶

Real medical notoriety came to Sims after he published an account of his successful surgical cure for vesicovaginal fistula (VVF) in 1852.⁹⁷ A relatively common occurrence for women who survive prolonged obstructed labor during childbirth, this condition is caused by the loss of deadened skin inside the vaginal canal at its threshold with the bladder, producing an internal opening between the two organs. In addition to the fact that such births often resulted in the loss of the child, women suffering from fistulas must then live with the complete loss of urinary control, in addition to severe ulceration of the vulva and upper thighs which can develop as a result.⁹⁸

In the summer of 1845, three enslaved women suffering from fistulas were brought into Sims' care. Originally assessing them as untreatable, a coincidental emergency encounter with a white woman experiencing abdominal pain after a fall

⁹⁵ Sims, *Story of My Life*, 1885.

⁹⁶ Sims, *Story of My Life*, 12.

⁹⁷ Sims, "On the Treatment of...", 1852.

⁹⁸ Wall, "The Medical Ethics of," 347.

from her horse facilitated an epiphany for Sims. Through a combination of inverted positioning and a bent spoon, Sims now believed he could gain both visual and manual access to the region of the vaginal canal which had heretofore been believed to be surgically inaccessible.

Over the course of the next four years, Sims performed hundreds of experimental surgeries on at least ten enslaved women, consigned to Sims' care by their plantation owners.⁹⁹ Finally in 1849, Sims reported the first successful surgical closure of a fistula. The procedures, implements and techniques which Sims developed to treat VVF were received with great fanfare by medical journals of the era, and many retain his name to this day.

Sims' fame is centered around his VVF treatments, but the full scope of Sims' work comprised many more areas of ethically questionable experimentation which the doctor undertook on his path to medical fame. In 1853, Sims relocated to New York City, where he next endeavored to found the Woman's Hospital. In New York, his experiments gained new resources and legitimacy. His resume expanded to include ovariectomy to treat menstrual cramps and diarrhea—and even clitoridectomy, or female castration. In 1878, Sims published, "On the Surgical Treatment of Stenosis of the Cervix Uteri," in which he describes at length the insertion of a spring-loaded series of blades, which, once inserted into the uterus, were meant to improve ingress of sperm into the womb. Similar treatments were prescribed for women who expressed pain during intercourse.¹⁰⁰ Not the first to attempt such procedures, Sims still made

⁹⁹ Lerner, "Scholars Argue," 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Sims, "Clinical Notes on Uterine Surgery," 331.

sure to put his branded stamp on it: "The anteroposterior incision belongs to Sims," he declared, "and not to Emmet, or any one else."¹⁰¹

Sims would parley his niche expertise with the female pelvis to great international cosmopolitan fame, making appearances in a great many European cities during the Civil War. Designs to commemorate Sims in monumental form began immediately after his death in 1883, organized with assistance from the *Medical Record*, a leading publication among physicians at the time. The Sims Memorial Fund Committee hired German sculptor Ferdinand von Miller II for the project, and the completed monument arrived in the United States in April 1892.

When the committee approached the Department of Public Parks with their physician-funded statue, the municipal authority denied its requested placement in Central Park, agreeing instead to feature it in a newly refurbished Bryant Park. While the entire memorial endeavor was framed as an honorific "thank you" from Sims' former patients, not a single woman served on the Sims Memorial Fund Committee. The *Medical Record* published the name and amount of each donation that went towards the monument's creation, and only a fraction had come from the surgeon's patients—"a tip-off, perhaps, that the hearts of women were less receptive to Sims's legacy than they were supposed to be."¹⁰²

The Sims memorial statue was dedicated in Bryant Park in 1894, attended by prominent members of the medical field. A bronze figure of heroic proportions, the

¹⁰¹ Hallman, "Monumental Error," 10.

¹⁰² Hallman, "Monumental Error," 4.

monument featured Sims dressed in a surgical jacket, standing pensively upon an original 10-ft raised pedestal of granite with inscriptions on either side. One side read:

J. MARION SIMS, M.D., LL.D. Born in South Carolina, 1813. Died in New York City, 1883. Surgeon and Philanthropist. Founder of the Woman's Hospital, State of New York. His brilliant achievements carried the fame of American Surgery throughout the civilised world. In recognition of his services in the cause of Science and Mankind. He received the highest honour in the city of his countrymen, and decorations from the Governments of France, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Italy.

On the other side, the inscription read: "to the city of New York by his professional friends, loving patients, and many admirers throughout the world."¹⁰³



Image 10: Memorial to J. Marion Sims in Bryant Park. Source: Wikimedia Commons

¹⁰³ "Unveiling of the Marion Sims Statue," 1894.

PART TWO: THE UNRAVELING OF PARTIAL TRUTHS

The statue of J. Marion Sims enjoyed the bulk of the 20th century in public view in New York City without issue. In the 1930s, another renovation of Bryant Park would see the statue placed in storage for a time. Robert Moses, who was Parks Commissioner at the time and noted opponent of monuments for aesthetic reasons, took the opportunity to envision a parks landscape with fewer monuments, and the Sims statue was conveniently “misplaced” for a matter of months.¹⁰⁴ The Art Commission—later renamed the Public Design Commission, and the entity which still presides over all public art decisions today—demanded the statue’s return. Moses would instead consent to a request from the New York Academy of Medicine to relocate the statue across the street at the edge of Central Park. The memorial was rededicated in October 1934.

Inserted into Central Park’s perimeter wall, this new, wider platform brought the bronze figure closer to the ground, yet maintained its dramatic reverence. Two circular inscriptions in the platform flank his figure, underscored by his dates of birth and death. The left reads: “Surgeon & Philanthropist; Founder of the Woman’s Hospital, State of New York; His Brilliant Achievement carried the fame of American surgery throughout the entire world.” The right: “In Recognition of his Service in the Cause of Science & Mankind; Awarded Highest honors by his Countrymen & Decorations from

¹⁰⁴ Hallman, “Monumental Error,” 5.

the Governments of Belgium, France, Italy, Spain & Portugal.” “J. Marion Sims, M.D. L.L.D.” is inscribed at center, flanked by two dual-serpent rods of Asclepius.



Image 11: Memorial to J. Marion Sims at its location in Central Park. Source: centralparknyc.org

Other memorials to Sims were erected elsewhere throughout the 20th century, such as at the South Carolina State Capitol in Columbia in 1929, in Montgomery, Alabama in 1939, as well as at his alma mater, Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. The latest was a marker erected at his birthplace in Lancaster County, South Carolina by the Waxhaw Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1949.

In the 1970s, however, the medical field as a whole fell under critiques lobbied by the rapidly expanding academic inquiries of gender and ethnic studies. The primary question is that of consent. Lucy, Betsey and Anarcha, the enslaved women upon whom Sims experimented for four years, were legally un-entitled to agency over their own bodies. Despite the fact that Sims reports having attained informed consent from them,¹⁰⁵ contemporary historians have disagreed about whether such permission could truly have been given by these women. The use of anesthetics had not yet become common practice, and Sims believed that the surgeries he performed on all fistula patients, regardless of race, were “not painful enough to justify the trouble, and risk attending their administration.”¹⁰⁶

G.J. Barker-Benfield’s *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life*¹⁰⁷ introduced a wider public audience to a deconstruction of the history of the medical field in 1976, cracking the first holes into the legitimacy of Sims’ honors, but Harriett A. Washington’s 2007 *Medical Apartheid* would open the floodgates.¹⁰⁸ After reading about the doctor’s treatment of his enslaved patients, a woman named Viola Plummer began handing out flyers in East Harlem while working as chief of staff for New York State Assemblyman Charles Barron. A group called East Harlem Preservation caught on and placed Plummer’s petition to remove the statue online.

East Harlem Preservation (EHP) is a community nonprofit which formed in 2005 through the efforts of activist Marina Ortiz “to promote and preserve the

¹⁰⁵ Sims, “Two cases of vesicovaginal fistula, cured,” 5.

¹⁰⁶ Sims, “Silver sutures,” 1858.

¹⁰⁷ Barker-Benfield, *The Horrors of the Half-Known Life*, 1976.

¹⁰⁸ Washington, *Medical Apartheid*, 2007.

neighborhood's history and diversity.”¹⁰⁹ Seeking to empower “underserved low-income, and working families in East Harlem/El Barrio,” the group provides an online resource for news and local programming, in addition to organizing events of their own. Since 2007, they have helped sponsor and organize a variety of actions to educate the community about Dr. Sims and demand the statue's removal from their community. Citing the history of medical experimentation to which communities of color have historically been subjected, EHP and Ms. Ortiz have lobbied pointed claims against the inappropriate context to commemorate the work carried out by Dr. Sims. “[The] Sims statue doesn't belong in a predominantly black and Latino community. It's outrageous.”¹¹⁰

In 2011, New York Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito joined the campaign by writing a letter to the Parks Department which advocated for the statue's removal. Describing the statue as “a constant reminder of the cruelty endured by women of color in our country's history,” Mark-Viverito also suggested that the Parks Department develop a protocol to allow a community's residents to comment upon the statues in their neighborhood which they might deem inappropriate.¹¹¹ The NYC Parks Department responded that it did “not remove art retroactively on the basis of content,” but agreed instead to add a sign to provide additional historical context to the statue.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ East Harlem Preservation, “About Us.”

¹¹⁰ Gonzales, “An Antebellum Hero, but to Whom?”

¹¹¹ Katz, “Ugly Reminder,” 2011.

¹¹² Gonzalez, “Sculpture of Paradox,” 2014.

Yet three years later, no language had been approved for such an addendum. A 2014 *New York Times* article revived the controversy, describing the limbo into which the statue had fallen.¹¹³ Seeking supplemental expert advice, the city solicited opinions from a philosophy professor at Union College named Robert Baker. Author of *Before Bioethics*,¹¹⁴ Baker's perspective was meant to shed light on the complicated ethical issues of consent, yet his reading of Sims took him at his word: if Sims said he obtained consent, he had. No consideration was given to the enslaved women's wholesale lack of agency in the context of southern slaveholding society.

Art historian Michele Bogart also weighed in at a meeting that the Parks Department called, at last, in June 2014. Her feelings on the subject reflected her disciplinary expertise, as well as its biases: regardless of the memorial's so-called 'content' or the degree to which the community felt affected by it, the statue's age-value alone gave it historical significance as public art. The public's sentiments, according to Bogart, were irrelevant—leave it to the experts to decide.¹¹⁵ While the meeting had begun with an apology for years of inaction, the city once again declined motions to remove the statue and reiterated its intention to add another sign. As the public had become increasingly aware of the statue's controversial honors, the city seemed to be doubling down on its commitment to a sanitized narrative of Sims' legacy.

¹¹³ Gonzalez, "Sculpture of Paradox."

¹¹⁴ Baker, 2013.

¹¹⁵ Hallman, "Monumental Error," 10.

Two years later, the Parks Department finally came forward with a proposal for a plaque which would include the names of the women who were the subject of Sims experiments. In response, Community Board 11 issued a letter to Parks Commissioner Mitchell Silver, reaffirming the community's wishes to have the statue removed and reinstalled elsewhere:

Dr. Sims, a product of the antebellum South, strongly believed in the practice of slavery and used enslaved women as his medical research subjects. By law, slave women were three-fifths of a person who could not consent to or refuse any alteration to their own bodies...The forced silence of his patients, and the circumstances in which they were operated on, also leaves many questioning whether the statue honoring Dr. Sims should remain standing anywhere within New York City. As East Harlem is a neighborhood predominately made up of people of color, it is particularly egregious that this statue is installed here. For all of these reasons, we urge the Department of Parks and Recreation to find an alternative location for this statue that is not in Community District 11.

No further action was taken by the city that year.

In September 2016, East Harlem Preservation partnered with an artist collective called the Laundromat Project to hold an educational event at the site. Speaking out in solidarity with the reproductive rights of women of color, the event used the site as evidence of the historical and ongoing de-valuation of Black and Latina female bodies by a range of medical standards and institutionalized practices. In February 2017, East Harlem Preservation hosted a panel discussion which featured *Medical Apartheid* author Harriet Washington, in addition to reproductive justice scholar activist Dr. Lynn Roberts, and Diane Collier, Chair of East Harlem's Community Board 11.¹¹⁶

Washington, who originally advocated for keeping the statue in place with added interpretive material, redirected her support to the statue's relocation after a

¹¹⁶ EHP, "J. Marion Sims."

personal visit to Germany. “One thing Germany does is the banning of the semiotics of Nazism...There is zero tolerance. That is what a civilized society does. It does not celebrate symbols of enslavement and genocide.” As demonstrated by memorials to the Confederacy, statues can wield “symbolic ‘tyranny’ whose mere presence underscores ‘power and importance, rather than virtue.’”¹¹⁷



Figure 12: Black Youth Project 100 at the J. Marion Sims statue in 2017. Source: *Reuters*

After the tragic unfolding of events in Charlottesville, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the formation of an Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments and Markers on August 17, 2017. Former NYC Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito wrote a letter to the Mayor reiterating her multiple prior requests for consideration of the statue’s removal, this time with pointed reference to the planned 90-day review. On August 19, artists and activists from Black Youth Project 100 also took full advantage

¹¹⁷ Gonzalez, “Antebellum Hero,” 2017.

of this moment of critical awakening to orchestrate a demonstration which mapped the violence of Sims experiments onto their own bodies (Figure 12). The opportunity to confront the presence of lingering symbols of institutionalized and unedited white supremacy in public space had perhaps finally arrived. “This is an incredible moment that has opened up,” said Mark-Viverito. “It has got to go.”¹¹⁸

In November 2017, J. C. Hallman addressed the planned reconsideration of the Sims monument in *Harper’s Magazine* by placing the NYC Mayoral Review Commission into a context of conflicting accounts and commemorations of the man’s legacy throughout the 20th-century. Alternating between caricatures of hero and villain, these accounts oscillate at both extremes between hyperbole and blatant refusal to examine fact. Parsing fact from socio-political agenda, Hallman highlights how historical narratives must repeatedly contend with both material veneration and socio-cultural critique.

While Sims’ medical practices were not without critique even during his lifetime, the impulse to shower the man with praise nevertheless took primacy after his death—a transformation Hallman describes with reference to “hagiography,” the idealizing biography of a saint. Hallman describes the top-down process by which monuments are assigned to public space, and by which they are then guarded in further opacities of municipal oversight. Hallman concludes that as gruesome as Sims’ career was, his intentions were not so much evil as they were selfishly driven and at best ethically questionable, even within the standards of the day. Medical historians Sara Spettel and

¹¹⁸ Gonzalez, “Antebellum Hero.”

Mark Donald White have also argued that the medical field's willingness to continue to portray Sims as a great figure in medical history has perpetuated a problematic detachment "from the public debate on his legacy and, thus, the larger issues of ethical treatment of surgical patients." Historical distance cannot excuse this man from his errors, and neither should his legacy in bronze preclude the reinterpretation of his so-called medical contributions.

PART THREE: HISTORICAL RECKONING

The pressure to carry out a responsible process for reviewing sites of public contention in the Fall of 2017 was high. It became clear early on that the statue of Dr. Sims would be one of the monuments reviewed by the process initiated by Mayor de Blasio. Between 2007 and 2017, East Harlem Preservation pursued the removal of the statue of Sims by sustained, tripartite methods of spatial protest, long-term community coalition building and official letters to the Parks Department as well as the Mayor. When the Mayoral Advisory Commission was formed in November 2017, the Sims monument was one of three highlighted for removal in a letter to the commission crafted by a broad range of academics.¹¹⁹ Ten years of sustained community lobbying efforts on the subject of symbols of white supremacy suddenly took on new immediacy in the wake of the violence in Charlottesville.

The selection process for these monuments was conducted through five public hearings, one in each borough between November 17 and 28, 2017, and an online

¹¹⁹ "Letter from Scholars," 2017.

survey was deployed in addition. In total, approximately 200 verbal testimonies and over 3,000 survey responses were recorded, and all are publicly available on the commission's webpage. The commission was co-chaired by NYC Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Tom Finkelpearl, and Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation.

The four monuments selected for review were the Theodore Roosevelt statue at the American Museum of Natural History, the statue of Christopher Columbus which soars over Columbus Circle, a plaque to Henri Philippe Pétain along the Canyon of Heroes on lower Broadway, and lastly the statue of J. Marion Sims on the eastern edge of Central Park near the New York Academy of Medicine. The official charge of the Commission was to develop “non-binding guidelines” for how the City should “address monuments seen as inconsistent with the values of New York City.”¹²⁰ The introduction to the Report summarizes their approach as follows:

The Mayoral Advisory Commission on City Art, Monuments, and Markers...is committed to a process of historical reckoning, a nuanced understanding of the complicated histories we have inherited. Due to the various time periods and methods of its assembly, New York City's current collection of monuments and markers celebrates some histories and erases others. Redressing this issue should be a process that moves beyond an all-or-nothing choice between keeping or removing monuments. We recognize that public dialogue, opportunities for engagement, and debate about history are essential for democracy and should be nurtured.¹²¹

Essential to this statement are the notions of historical erasure, democracy, and “historical reckoning.” The presentation given at the start of each public hearing put these review proceedings into the context of other municipalities across the US, also

¹²⁰ “Report to the City of New York,” 4.

¹²¹ “Report to the City of New York,” 2.

engaged with developing appropriate responses to the current debate on monument removal.

The most important and innovative portion of the report, however, was in its expressed attention to examine “sustained adverse public reaction,” further qualified as “two years or more.”¹²² Listed separately—though arguably describing another dimension of similar public concern—is an additional attention to “large-scale community opposition,” framed specifically as “part of larger cultural/political concerns.”¹²³ Whether intentionally or implicitly, this identification of public intervention as instrumental to the site’s significance makes *formal* a certain valorization of the work carried out by East Harlem Preservation to sustain a spatial presence of public opposition at the Sims statue.

In the struggle for rights, geographer Don Mitchell has highlighted the importance of public space as a “space of representation,” in which groups and individuals can make themselves visible:

While it is no doubt true that the work of citizenship requires a multitude of spaces, from the most private to the most public...public spaces are decisive, for it is here that the desires and needs of individuals and groups can be seen, and therefore recognized, resisted, or...wiped out. The logic of representation demands the construction—or, better, the social production—of certain (though not necessarily predetermined) kinds of space.¹²⁴

The actions sustained by EHP and allied groups functioned together to transform the Sims monument from a public space of passive commemoration, into one of critical, open conversation. Prior to 2007, this portion of Central Park had been a space of

¹²² “Report to the City of New York,” 3.

¹²³ “Report to the City of New York,” 3.

¹²⁴ Mitchell, *Right to the City*, 33.

uninformed acceptance of narratives whose claims to truth were premised upon their material representation in public rather than their interpretive substantiation by historical fact. Yet beginning in 2007, when Viola Plummer first started handing out pamphlets, and reaching completion through the artist interventions in 2016 and 2017, the statue's presence became transformed instead into a place of active public engagement with the past—a place from which the East Harlem community could make pointed and visible claims for justice, rooted demonstratively in the false permanence of spatial representations of the past.

The city's answer to its pronounced record of municipal inaction—in regards both to historical fact and to justice-related claims made by the city's residents—was to add new forms of expertise and clear participatory mechanisms to the Commission's review process. Yet while participatory by design, and undoubtedly an important and difficult gesture to solicit opinions from a city of over 8.5 million inhabitants, five public meetings and a public survey yielded approximately 3,200 data points—a result which still leaves something to be desired. The report's goal to correct “egregious historical oversight”¹²⁵ was pursued through the roster of Commissioners, insofar as each participant contributed a range of professional and cultural legitimacy. The Commissioners included an assembly of well-renowned artists and academics, and the language of their report reflects a sensitive and nuanced understanding of the historical and contemporary implications of the sites reviewed.

¹²⁵ “Report to the City of New York,” 3.

Yet despite the city's best-laid plans, the contentious moment into which this report has been published is nevertheless primed for continued critique. East Harlem Preservation, whose community organizing efforts provided a central reference point for the campaign to have the Sims statue removed, expressed relief that the figural statue would be moved away from its location but frustration that the pedestal with its current text would remain. "This is an unacceptable insult to the East Harlem community—one which has robbed us of the possibility of creating an entirely new, more empowering, artistic vision for the site."¹²⁶

An article in the *New York Times* echoed some of this frustration, albeit focused on sites other than the Sims memorial, pointing to the Commission report's measured backtracking on some of de Blasio's more assertive claims at the Commission's outset.¹²⁷ Applauding the Commission for tackling questions of far more intense socio-historical complexity than the original review's intention to assess "symbols of hate," the article's author, David Gonzalez, sees the decision to relocate the statue of Sims as a long-awaited acknowledgement of the community's sentiments. Yet Gonzalez calls out the report for balking at the other subjects of review, each of which will remain in place with minor interpretive addenda. The Commission's recommendations for the commanding statue of Theodore Roosevelt at the Natural History Museum, however, appear to have stalled on failed consensus between its expert Commission members—essentially disregarding a range of well-documented, sustained demonstrations by multiple groups in recent years. As David Gonzalez puts it, the commission's decision

¹²⁶ East Harlem Preservation, "Keeping White Supremacy on Its Pedestal."

¹²⁷ Gonzalez, "Half-Measures," 2017.

“sets history behind a protective screen of educational outreach and programming, initiatives that all too easily blend into the great, perspectiveless digital wash of the present.”¹²⁸

While it should indeed prove important that the Commission’s report identifies publicly demonstrated objection to commemorative sites as an important feature of a monument’s continued occupation of public space, the uneven application of this metric to each of the sites reviewed indicates how firmly the power to represent history continues to reside with the experts put in charge. Gonzalez’s article succeeds in putting the review process into a broader understanding of the production of historical narrative, locating the addition of interpretive text to these inherently spatial images of history as unavoidably and dangerously within the category of other easily-ignored digital media—“a culture of not-knowing history.”¹²⁹ Yet hope remains in precisely the critical public interventions which the review process, by not recommending the Roosevelt statue’s removal, has implicitly enabled to continue. With luck, says Gonzalez, the Commission’s decisions will ultimately “get activist blood boiling again.”¹³⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The Commission’s 2018 Report was published within a moment of public demand for proactive remembrance—for a future-oriented approach to the social

¹²⁸ Gonzalez, “Half-Measures,” 2017.

¹²⁹ Gonzalez, “Half-Measures,” 2017.

¹³⁰ Gonzalez, “Half-Measures,” 2017.

function of historical narratives in public space. Fueled by the unmistakable media images of white supremacists marching to protect the material heritage with which—and through which—they have maintained deep identity-forming, emotional and social connections, ethically-minded policy decision-makers and their bureaucratic entities have been compelled to make changes to the ways we protect commemorative markers and their narratives.

Yet still the expert-layperson divide was ultimately upheld. Whether this moment will prove a fundamental sea change or a forgotten moment of change will remain to be seen, but the meaningful integration of lessons learned through these current experiments in responding to public debate will be contingent upon the willingness of heritage professionals to not only explicitly listen to those whose voices have, up until recently, been systematically ignored, but to take up their cause. Preservationists may be practiced in apprehending the cumulative significance of social historiography, but the field remains cautious about assigning truth to contemporary expressions of social value.

The critiques to which East Harlem Preservation has remained committed at the memorial to J. Marion Sims are ultimately inflected with claims to spatial justice. The community has maintained its claim to the right to collectively interpret and call for changes to be made to a public space of commemoration for the real histories they recall, regardless of those they appear to represent. Insofar as the report acknowledges these critical interventions as an important component with which to evaluate the statue's claim to permanence—or rather, the legitimacy of city's continued upkeep of the statue in situ—the language of the Commission's review has thereby

also validated the process by which the statue's significance in public space has been—and can be—fundamentally transformed through public use.

This is significant to historic preservation practice because it re-configures the notion of value from exclusively a kind of “content” that is essentially stable and dictated by the historical event by which or for which the site came into existence, into additionally being a quality which is a function of *use*. In the case of the Sims monument discussed here, as well as throughout the spatial contestations which have punctuated the debate over Confederate statues, it is only through a visible transformation in the use-value of the site that the lies or flaws in the former kind of value are also made intelligible—and therefore also worthy of material alteration.

While the former, seemingly intrinsic value of the site would appear to substantiate the city's commitment to a stable maintenance plan without varying interpretive measures or material alterations—all in keeping with Michele Bogart's 2014 opinion—this framework fails to acknowledge the incomplete or uneven constructions of historical narrative, and the definitive role of power structures therein.

Once the Confederate monuments became so visibly linked to active and organized white supremacists, their use-value highlighted the overlooked dimension of their historical value through which they were brought into existence—that they were largely tools for political demarcation and racial terror relating to Jim Crow-era southern politics. Similarly, once the members of Black Youth Project 100 represented the violence of Sims work upon their own bodies within the space of his commemoration, a wider public and the city's decision-makers were confronted with the dissonance between what the monument was believed to celebrate and what the

man himself actually did. Critical intervention—or any change in a site’s use—can make visible certain errors in otherwise intrinsic valuation of a historical representation by transforming the social construction of the site from passive acceptance to those of conversation and question-asking.



Image 13: City workers removing the statue of Sims in April 2018. Source: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Image 14: A protester smiles after the statue’s removal. Source: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

CHAPTER FIVE

Interrogating Bronze: Re-deploying the Image of Conquest to Facilitate Reconciliation in Northern New Mexico

“Just like toppling Robert E. Lee...it’s time to topple this revisionist history and say...we acknowledge what happened in this area...We acknowledge that what we’re celebrating is wrong, and we’re going to stop.” — Elena Ortiz,¹³¹ Pueblo activist

In the weeks that followed the violent white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the public debate over monuments reached a fever pitch. Within this moment of public conservation, the *New York Times* revived a story about an action that took place in New Mexico in 1997,¹³² when a group of indigenous activists called the Friends of Acoma sawed off the foot of a bronze statue of Don Juan de Oñate, the conquistador who was instrumental in seizing the area for Spain.

Seeing the relevance of the amputation of this statue’s foot to the current debate, one of the original members of the activist group emerged from obscurity to approach Cheyenne-Arapaho filmmaker Chris Eyre. Eyre then arranged a meeting between the activist and *New York Times* author Simon Romero, also from New Mexico. In two short articles published on September 30 and October 2, 2017, Romero details his conversations with Eyre and the unnamed activist on the importance of

¹³¹ Chacón, “Monuments,” 2017.

¹³² Romero, “Statue’s Stolen Foot,” 2017.

questioning messages conveyed at historical sites across the United States. In reference to President Trump's equation of statue removal to "changing history,"¹³³ readers are reminded that those who champion the perspective of indigenous history agree that many narratives must indeed be reconsidered. "Trump asked if all this stops with Washington or Jefferson," recalls Eyre; "For me, that's actually where it starts because we need to go back a whole lot further to examine the crimes upon which these lands were claimed."¹³⁴

This chapter's study begins at disparate moments, with mnemonic actors and heritage agendas unaware of their eventual intersections. The politics of public remembrance and forgetting at work at this site demonstrate the cumulative complications of over 400 years of unreconciled parallel narratives. The statue of Oñate which stands outside of Española, NM, with a re-cast foot, is a testament to the persistence of distinct identity communities with deeply embedded heritage attachments, formed in opposition and under conditions of radically uneven political agency.

What follows will illustrate three dimensions of narrative findings, sought respectively through media discourse, an archaeological history, and stakeholder analysis. After discussing the statue's defacement in 1997, a deeper context of indigenous resistance is provided through reference to an archaeological project examining the era of Pueblo revitalization between 1680-1692. A third narrative introduces the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area as the active heritage entity

¹³³ Schuessler, "Historians Question Trump's Comments," 2017.

¹³⁴ Romero, "Statue's Stolen Foot."

which now occupies the site where the Oñate statue stands. Towards the development of recommendations for managing the site, this contextual triptych is then analyzed through reference to Liz Sevchenko's work at the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience,¹³⁵ as well as Robert Johnston and Kimberley Marwood's working notions of "action heritage."¹³⁶

While the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area is well-positioned to solicit diverse participation across the cultural landscapes of its three-county region, an approach of explicit reconciliation between identity groups may be required to meaningfully address the inflammatory tensions surrounding narratives of colonization, bearing intentional witness to the region's repressed histories of violent cultural interaction. This chapter explores how local collaborations, actualized through co-engagements with the materiality of heritage representation, could perhaps function in support of the development of more fundamental measures of cultural parity.

OÑATE'S FOOT

In 1991, New Mexico State Senator and Rio Arriba County political boss Emilio Naranjo began a campaign to honor the region's first Spanish colonial governor, Don Juan de Oñate. At the time, no other cultural heritage center existed in northern New Mexico to celebrate the region's unflagging Hispanic pride,¹³⁷ and Naranjo was

¹³⁵ Ševčenko, "Sites of Conscience," 2011.

¹³⁶ Johnston and Marwood, "Action Heritage," 2017.

¹³⁷ The National Hispanic Cultural Center opened in Albuquerque in 2000.

motivated to leverage his more than 30 years in politics towards the creation of a permanent historical landmark which would guarantee his legacy.

With promises to create a world-class visitor center to celebrate Hispanic heritage, a site was chosen near the location of Oñate's first capital settlement at San Gabriel de Yungue-Ouinge,¹³⁸ 25 miles north of Santa Fe. Through a series of legislative initiatives, Capital Outlay appropriations, Rio Arriba County tax dollars, and a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration, an estimated sum of \$2.4 million was spent towards the project.¹³⁹ New Mexico sculptor Reynaldo "Sonny" Rivera created the \$120,000, 12-foot bronze equestrian statue of Juan de Oñate, unveiled in 1993 at a dedication ceremony attended by hundreds of local residents.



Image 15: Statue of Oñate in Alcalde, NM. Source: Fran Barber

¹³⁸ A National Historic Landmark since 1964, the site is otherwise today a buried archaeological site marked by a cross and historical plaque.

¹³⁹ Barker, "Oñate's final folly."

Rising up out of an otherwise desolate natural landscape of sparsely developed, high desert terrain, Oñate's bronze figure charges forth on horseback, cape flapping in the wind. Leaning forward with a raised, tight grip on taught reins, Oñate wears a helmet, his brow furrowed. He is armed with both pistol and sword at his side. Visually, the statue unambiguously portrays a man at war. His commanding silhouette cuts sharply into the open sky behind him, projecting military might.

Behind the statue sits a large Spanish Colonial Revival visitor center, in pink stucco. Yet according to the center's former Project Director, Dr. Robert McGeagh, the center never functioned according to its original purpose. Despite its grand aspirations, "no one had bothered to draw up a business plan for the center detailing how the monument would draw tourists or boost the economy."¹⁴⁰ Naranjo was ousted by a newly elected County Commission soon after the center opened in 1994, and the project lost political support.

The most meaningful thing to happen at the Oñate Monument Center would occur on the eve of the 400th anniversary of Oñate's arrival, in explicit rejection of the center's commemorative intentions. While for the Hispanic communities in New Mexico, Juan de Oñate represents the arrival of their ancestors, the man's crimes against the surrounding population of native peoples have forever defined the man's legacy within indigenous collective memory as one of extreme corporeal and cultural violence. After one particular skirmish with Acoma Pueblo warriors in 1599, Oñate sentenced 24 men to have their right foot cut off. The Spanish crown itself would

¹⁴⁰ Barker, "Oñate's final folly."

remove the man from power in 1606, convicting him of undue brutality and banning him from New Mexico for life.¹⁴¹ In late December 1997, a group of activists took it upon themselves to recall these unmentioned facts of Oñate's influence upon the heritage landscape of the region, and in the dead of night they enacted revenge in kind by severing the statue's own right foot.



Image 15: Statue of Oñate after the 1997 dismemberment. Source: *Albuquerque Journal*

Perhaps as a consequence of the center's remote location or its general lack of organizational strength, no one at the Center initially noticed that a bronze foot had gone missing. The activists, calling themselves Friends of Acoma, were compelled as a result to supplement their material intervention by sending letters and photographs detailing their deed and its pointed intentions to a series of local newspapers. As

¹⁴¹ "The Last Conquistador," 2008.

intended, a fierce debate was sparked throughout the state, capturing the imagination of activists, scholars and artists alike.¹⁴² The statue's foot was swiftly recast and welded back onto the figure at the cost of 10,000 taxpayer dollars, but the center's facilities were vacant by the end of the decade.

The action had succeeded in tapping a small fracture into a cultural threshold between parallel historical truths which had arisen through 400 years of independent, yet unevenly empowered remembrances. After 82 years of Spanish rule, a unique alliance of otherwise disparate communities of Pueblo peoples succeeded in 1680 to oust their overlords, initiating a 12-year period of Pueblo independence which is not often elaborated upon in official histories of the state. Don Diego de Vargas recaptured Santa Fe in 1692, and by 1712 the first annual Santa Fe Entrada Fiesta had been established to reenact the “peaceful resettlement” of the region. Regardless of the work of contemporary academics to correct the oversimplification of these narratives—supplementing them with new archaeological data and critical analysis which all indicate that very little about the colonial enterprise could be described as entirely peaceful—the redemptive narrative of the Spanish having bestowed Catholicism and civilization upon the region were written and made real through ritual repetition long ago.

Despite New Mexico's prevailing tourism narratives which celebrate this peaceful intermixture of indigenous and Hispanic cultural elements throughout the state, significant social, economic, and political disparities persist along explicitly racial

¹⁴² Such as the poem “The Right Foot of Juan de Oñate” by Martín Espada.

categories. As stated in a 2017 article for the *Rio Grande Sun*, “The racism here is real, multi-directional and simmers just below the surface.”¹⁴³

PUEBLO REVITALIZATION

The material intervention at the statue of Oñate requires a deeper dive into the colonial era for greater contextual perspective. The cultural interaction between Spanish colonists and native Pueblo people played out through negotiations in blood and maize, but also significantly through the mutual destruction and refashioning of oppositional material cultures of power.

The Spanish established themselves into a region inhabited by a great range of both settled Pueblo peoples, as well as nomadic tribes of Apache, Navajo, Zuni, Ute, and others. After nearly 60 years of attempted entry by soldiers, missionaries, and settlers, each time driven back south by various war parties, Don Juan de Oñate’s army would ultimately secure a settlement in 1598 in the region of the contemporary town of Española and the Ohkay-Owingeh reservation. Oñate brought with him over a hundred families and nearly a dozen Franciscan priests with which he intended to establish a new Spanish colony.¹⁴⁴

Framing their settlements around the Church, cities constructed by the Spanish in New Mexico after 1598 followed the same gridded plan repeated in every city throughout the Spanish colonial universe, as dictated by the Laws of the Indies.¹⁴⁵ New

¹⁴³ Trapp, “Drop Baggage,” 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Rolwing, “Conquistador’s Legacy,” 1998.

¹⁴⁵ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 117.

Mexico's new capital of Santa Fe would be laid out in 1610 according to this same philosophy. More than merely an architectural plan, says anthropologist Tom Cummins,¹⁴⁶ the grid was "a model for creating Christian order" in an otherwise barbaric new world.

The written record, provided by priests and army commanders from this period, has undergone manifold interpretations which differ widely on the relationships forged between the native populations and the Spanish colonists. Indeed, they are likely to have been multiple. At times characterized by accommodation and attempted understanding, the mechanisms of economic and territorial control that the Spanish imposes upon the region surrounding the Rio Grande was nevertheless fraught with violent rejection of native lifeways and Oñate soon became well known for tactics of harsh retribution.

The foot incident for which Oñate would become most infamous occurred early in Oñate's tenure as governor. While seeking provisions on the high mesa of Acoma Pueblo in late 1598, several Spanish soldiers were killed for having stolen supplies and violating an Acoma woman. The Spanish returned in force to lay siege to the mesa, slaughtering hundreds, and imprisoning hundreds more. Oñate's sentence for those who survived was to cut off one foot of every man over the age of 25. Younger men were sentenced to 25 years of personal servitude, women to 20 years. Children were sent to Mexico City to serve in convents. The corporeal brutality and enslavement of many hundreds of native peoples during Oñate's tenure as the region's governor would

¹⁴⁶ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 117.

ultimately provide the legal basis for his removal from power and banishment from the region by the Spanish crown.

Yet even after Oñate's departure, colonial practices of forced labor, exorbitant taxation and multiple waves of disease resulted in the radical restructuring of native society.¹⁴⁷ The most significant of these changes occurred through the explicit eradication of Pueblo religious objects.

The Franciscan leadership decreed an unconditional prohibition of kachina dances, and missionaries were instructed to collect and destroy all materials of 'idolatry.' Short thereafter, priests reportedly incinerated sixteen hundred kachina masks.¹⁴⁸

Today, such practices are commonly understood as cultural genocide. Yet while these diverse Pueblo peoples had maintained distinct tribal identities, territorial allegiances, and a plethora of different languages for hundreds of years prior to the Spaniards arrival, with the imposition of colonial rule, all were subject to a common oppressor.

In 1680, a Pueblo man named Po'pay successfully orchestrated a united insurrection by an entire region of disparate Pueblo villages. Timed creatively through a system of knotted cords which were distributed by runners to indicate the number of days until the uprising, the rebellion synchronized the execution of over 400 Spaniards in power, and thousands of the settlers and priests who remained were driven out of the region. An important era of Pueblo independence followed, lasting twelve years.

Archaeologist Michael Liebmann has written extensively on the unique material culture of Pueblo revitalization which occurred during this short but deeply significant

¹⁴⁷ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 31.

¹⁴⁸ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 36.

window of time. His 2012 book, *Revolt: An Archaeological History of Pueblo Resistance and Revitalization in 17th Century New Mexico* develops narratives heretofore untold about this period, acquired through a project undertaken jointly with contemporary members of the Jemez Pueblo tribe. Above and beyond the requirements established by the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, research for Liebmann's book was carried out through participatory collaborations at all phases of the project's design, data collection and interpretation.¹⁴⁹

This era of Pueblo revitalization was characterized by the widespread destruction of as many traces of colonial-era rule as the continued survival of Pueblo society could practically tolerate. Po'pay ordered communities to "smash and burn the images of Christ, the Virgin and saints, the crosses and everything having to do with Christianity; to burn the churches, smash the bells."¹⁵⁰ The goal was to return to the lifeways which had been maintained since ancient times.

The newly independent Pueblo people endeavored to recreate former settlement patterns which had been gridded over by the Spanish, tearing down certain buildings and replacing them with more compact, aggregated forms. Eschewing the tripartite cosmology of Catholicism's Holy Trinity, the architectural forms produced during this period reflect a conscious reassertion of balanced dualism and symmetry into their spatial vocabularies.¹⁵¹ Archaeological evidence indicates the construction of twin-

¹⁴⁹ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 20.

¹⁵⁰ Liebmann, "The Innovative Materiality," 363.

¹⁵¹ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 121.

plaza units with structures divided into complementary pairs, reflecting a shared ideological template throughout this independent Pueblo era.

A work of historical anthropology, Liebmann's book analyzes the Pueblo Revolt and era of independence under a comparative schema of subaltern resistance and cultural revitalization.¹⁵² Understood within the literature of revitalization movements worldwide—which exhibit “rapid, intentional attempts to restructure culture and society,” Liebmann is able to make a particularly strong case for the role of material culture in making comprehensive visual and practical changes throughout society and social practice.¹⁵³

Liebmann mobilizes the discourse of the “subaltern,”¹⁵⁴ to denote specifically “persons who are unable to access dominant forms of representation....[and are thus] structurally written out of official histories.”¹⁵⁵ While his intentions are neither to speak on behalf of the historical subalterns of Pueblo peoples, nor to generalize their experience as identical to revitalization efforts elsewhere, Liebmann nevertheless draws useful comparisons between these typologies in order to correlate the material culture of this era with other anti-colonial struggles, in which collective identities of resistance are forged through direct material manipulation of the signs and spaces of those in power.

After the Pueblo Revolt, new pan-Pueblo identities were forged through the invention of a new, uniquely hybrid material culture which integrated elements of

¹⁵² Liebmann, *Revolt*, 4.

¹⁵³ Liebmann, “The Innovative Materiality,” 360.

¹⁵⁴ As developed by nineteenth century philosopher Antonio Gramsci.

¹⁵⁵ Liebmann, *Revolt*, 11.

previously disparate, ethnolinguistic groups with some surviving influences from close to a century of Spanish rule.¹⁵⁶ Just as the Spanish imposed colonial power through the destruction of ritual icons and the Christianizing structure of gridded settlements, repressed indigenous groups equally strove to confront and refashion these technologies of power directly in their spatial and material incarnations.

When Don Vargas recaptured Santa Fe in 1692, the Spanish resumed their campaigns of exercising cultural power by reestablishing colonial systems of material and spatialized control. In 1712, these techniques were then further supplemented by the narrative reproductions embedded in the annual reenactments of the Santa Fe Fiesta, mentioned in the prior section. Firmly connecting history to place through an official collective remembrance, Hispanic narratives would overpower those of the Pueblo not merely through the power of written archives, but through traditions both spatial and embodied.

While their technologies of remembrance may not have traditionally included the production of written archives, Pueblo narratives of resistance and revitalization would remain constrained primarily by basic struggles to secure sovereign land. By wielding exclusive control over space and its collective practices, Hispanic narratives would assume the status of official truth, but in native memory, oral history, and the isolated spatial practices which would eventually be made possible with the establishment of independent reservations, the violence of the colonial encounter would never be forgotten. Disseminated and made meaningful through radically uneven resources of

¹⁵⁶ Liebmann, "The Innovative Materiality," 369.

remembrance, these are the parallel narratives which today make the statue of Oñate in Alcalde, NM a flashpoint of intercultural frustrations.

NORTHERN RIO GRANDE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

By 2016, the Oñate Monument Center was vacant and unmarked, a padlocked gate at its entry on New Mexico State Road 74. An investigative report carried out by correspondent Larry Barker of Albuquerque's KRQE News 13 portrayed the statue and visitor center as representing "not a place of honor, but rather a monument to waste, backdoor politics, and a reckless abuse of power." The statue had become a local symbol of the region's recent history of political corruption, even beyond its contentious reference to a perpetrator of historical violence.¹⁵⁷ Yet within a year of Barker's report, a new heritage project had stepped into the position of managing the conflicted site: in early 2017, the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area (NRGNHA) became the Oñate Monument Center's new tenant.

Created in 2006, the NRGNHA is one of 49 such regional entities nationwide, which are designed to link existing heritage sites throughout a given region through the development of overarching interpretive scaffolding and integrated planning strategies for cross-sector community participation. Rather than directly managing any historically significant sites itself, the NRGNHA is instead charged with the complex task of promoting a wide range of heritage resources scattered throughout the three-county region of Rio Arriba, Taos and Santa Fe in northern New Mexico.

¹⁵⁷ Barker, "Oñate's final folly."

In many ways, the NRGNHA is the natural and best-equipped heritage stakeholder and organizational apparatus to take on the region's conflicting historical narratives which are embedded within the statue's symbol. In others, it may need to strategically out-manuever some of its federally-designed limitations.

While the Oñate Monument and its Visitor Center had centered its focus on the Spanish colonial dimensions of the region's history, the NRGNHA is designed to embrace the region's full spectrum of cultural and natural histories by direct engagement with a range of diverse institutions. Yet as demonstrated in New York City's Mayoral Advisory Commission, discussed in the prior chapter, a language of inclusion and an organizational ethic of participatory engagement with the public—while imperative—cannot alone address the layers of sustained inequity at work in selective commemorations of the past.

Established through individual congressional legislation, each National Heritage Area (NHA) is operated by an independent nonprofit entity, which nevertheless remains intimately tied to federal programming through a required system of approval from the Department of the Interior and the receipt of annual funding appropriations distributed through the National Park Service.¹⁵⁸ Invented as a tool for Congressional designation of heritage places in the 1980s during the Ronald Reagan administration, the NHA correlates to an international growth of “cultural parks,” which aim to integrate a multiplicity of planning mechanisms into one policy tool.¹⁵⁹ While somewhat underutilized and under-studied, the cultural park model has recently grown in

¹⁵⁸ NPS, “National Heritage Areas.”

¹⁵⁹ Gonzáles and Vázquez, “Between Planning and Heritage,” 35.

popularity in Europe and the United States for its flexibility to integrate more community-based and participatory models of cultural resource management. Heritage areas are intended to shift emphasis “from the national to the local level, and management responsibilities move from scientists and experts to local agents.”¹⁶⁰

The heritage significance of central-northern New Mexico, for which the region received its federal designation, is as complex as it is diverse. The NRGNHA Management Plan locates the Area’s significance in the vibrant legacies of Native and Hispanic peoples that are imprinted throughout the high desert landscape. Yet these categories are far from binary. The Spanish encountered a great diversity of indigenous groups upon their arrival in the 16th century, and many of these distinct cultural values and traditional practices survive today. For the NRGNHA, the region’s value emanates from the intersections of cultural histories—in the hybrid practices, material culture and built forms which were born out of conflict and cohabitation, and in the continuity of traditional lifeways which persevere despite war, persecution and technological transformation.

The NRGNHA is managed by Executive Director Thomas Romero, and all programs are designed and implemented through consultation with the Board of Directors. This board is comprised of representatives from major towns or cities in the tri-county region, and a representative from each of the eight northern pueblos located within the Heritage Area borders—the Nambé, Ohkay Owingeh, Picurís, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Taos, and Tesuque—as well as from the Jicarilla Apache

¹⁶⁰ Gonzáles and Vázquez, “Between Planning and Heritage,” 39.

Nation.¹⁶¹ Board members contributed to the composition of the Management Plan, and meet regularly to discuss the implementation of action items, such as youth education development or site stewardship initiatives.

The mission of the NRGNHA is to help sustain the traditions, languages, cultural landscapes and natural environments of Northern New Mexico, yet this context of intermixture between Hispanic and indigenous peoples has made the question of which narratives to celebrate very complex. For all its intentions of inclusivity, the NRGNHA Management Plan does not identify or discuss any sources of cultural contention, past or present. Apart from some discussion of the region's constitutive wars, the plan's language is overwhelmingly positivist, looking to the great diversity of cultural backgrounds as a resource rather than obstacle. A resource it is, but it is a diversity not without discord. Protests continue annually against the celebrations in Santa Fe which romanticize the Spanish colonial era by erasing the depths of its violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the NRGNHA's grand opening in August of 2017, activities included local indigenous ceremonies, led by representatives from a number of different local tribes. Large white poster boards were installed in the front patio area of the complex where the Oñate statue is located. The interactive exhibit asked the public to express their emotional response to the statue's presence. These responses were archived when the

¹⁶¹ NRGNHA, *Management Plan*, I-8.

exhibit was taken down, and overwhelmingly expressed discomfort about the statue's imagery.

Within a few months of the opening, the statue's foot was painted red, and the words "Remember 1680" written on the monument's base. Leland Chapin, the center's gallery curator was instructed by the County not to publicize the event. While acknowledging that everyone's concerns must be meaningfully taken into account, Director Romero nevertheless added that he didn't want to "give it more fuel than it deserves."¹⁶² Rio Arriba County's protocol continues to be: re-cast the foot, clean off the paint. As of January 2018, the building's sign still reads "Oñate Monument Center."

The NRGNHA's cautious approach to taking action on these subjects is indicative of deeply felt cultural attachments within and throughout the diverse communities of Native American and Hispanic peoples in the immediate region surrounding the Center. As much as 40% of New Mexico's population identifies as Hispanic, representing the highest of any state in the USA.¹⁶³ When New Mexico and Arizona were annexed into the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, only New Mexico continued to compose its laws in Spanish as well as English. Native communities today—having been misunderstood, violated and intentionally forgotten by Hispanic narratives since Oñate's arrival in 1598—may not recognize that Hispanic communities also fear for the loss of their ancestral lifeways.

In addressing the profound embeddedness of these tensions, models of post-conflict reconciliation championed by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

¹⁶² Martinez, "Vandals Strike Statue," 2017.

¹⁶³ Baca, "Two Very Different Americas," 2010.

have been explored for their use of heritage sites to forge new, open-ended experiences with the past. The recommendations which follow take additional inspiration from more recent methods developed by Robert Johnston and Kimberley Marwood to explicitly foreground *process* within collective productions of heritage.¹⁶⁴

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience provides extensive research, both practical and theoretical, towards the operationalization of heritage sites towards the pursuit of human rights in a great variety of national contexts. By framing the history embedded in place as the subject of dialogue about ongoing social issues, their models transform historic site museums from places of mere passive learning into platforms for active citizen engagement.¹⁶⁵

As Liz Ševčenko has maintained through her work with Sites of Conscience, it is important to make the process part of the product:

Controversy is too often avoided as something damaging to an institution or a project; in fact, engaging conflicting perspectives is one of the greatest opportunities...The process of developing the story and experience is a productive starting point for dialogue about the contemporary issues at stake.¹⁶⁶

With reference to state-led Truth and Reconciliation Commissions such as those undertaken in South Africa, Chile, and Canada, Ševčenko's work seeks to elevate the role of heritage professionals in mobilizing the provocative and emotional settings of historically significant places in facilitating the public's confrontation of difficult events in the recent or distant past. Her recommendations include focusing on the human experience of individuals, providing an open forum for diverse stakeholder

¹⁶⁴ Johnston and Marwood, "Action Heritage," 2017.

¹⁶⁵ Ševčenko, "Sites of Conscience," 10.

¹⁶⁶ Ševčenko, *The Power of Place*, 14

engagement, and committing to an ongoing process in order to manage visitor expectations.¹⁶⁷ Reconciliation is not a timed challenge, but rather a commitment to ongoing conversation and critical reflection.

While a variety of useful precedents exist internationally for the use of contentious sites to facilitate productive conversation between previously opposed—or still oppositional—identity communities, these have often been facilitated by an overarching national mandate or official program for reconciliation. In the case of New Mexico, however, no national or state entity is poised to undertake such a role. Here, historical cultural wounds have been exacerbated by official invisibility and additional layers of modern resource disparities. Reconciliation in this context is invariably contingent upon the local commitments and concerted efforts of community members alone.

Robert Johnston and Kimberley Marwood have contributed to a growing body of literature on the use of heritage in social justice settings by developing a framework for conservation practice which they call “action heritage.”¹⁶⁸ Pointing to studies by David Harvey and Laurajane Smith which have previously established how heritage is inherently about making decisions about the relevance of past events to communities in the present, and is thus inextricably “an instrument of cultural power,”¹⁶⁹ these authors emphasize the importance of participation within the very production of historical knowledge itself. To include communities in the process of making decisions

¹⁶⁷ Ševčenko, *The Power of Place*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Johnston and Marwood, “Action Heritage,” 2017.

¹⁶⁹ Harvey, “Heritage Pasts,” 327.

about the relevance of the past to social trajectories in the present is at its core a project of social justice.

Johnston and Marwood point to the heritage of indigenous peoples and those involved in labor-rights struggles as primary areas of repressed narratives through history that are in need of a rights-based heritage practice to properly exhume narratives from collective memory.

Action heritage privileges process (action) over outcomes and addresses social inequalities through a dispersed and redistributive model of research practice. We identify four vectors to the action heritage framework: undisciplinary research, active rather than activist, with parity of participation, which is sustainable and sustained.¹⁷⁰

The term “undisciplinary”—borrowed from Ayuko Sedooka¹⁷¹—is used to highlight the utility of interdisciplinary teams of experts to initiate and mediate participatory processes, to the benefit of the public who are thusly not asked to conform to any one set of disciplinary standards.

Works that have best connected heritage undertakings to struggles for social justice have well-mobilized Nancy Fraser’s works asserting that recognition of identity difference is alone inadequate in redressing social inequity, and that these different and underrepresented groups must in fact take part in the process of self-representation and self-expression in order to attain full parity. The application of these models to heritage settings is crucial, and to this literature, Johnston and Marwood have added the imperative to dismantle the expert-driven aspects of research practice. Their

¹⁷⁰ Johnston and Marwood, “Action Heritage,” 827.

¹⁷¹ As used by Ayuko Sedooka et al, “Paradoxe identitaire et interdisciplinarité: un regard sur les identités disciplinaires des chercheurs,” 2015.

research intentionally sought to locate shifts in agency perceived within and throughout the groups involved, leading to the “acknowledgement of ‘shared epistemologies’ between community and university-based researchers.”¹⁷²

Johnston and Marwood further highlight a process that became highlighted through their participatory models which they have described as “disruption,” which they understood to indicate a fundamental and important shift in the recognition of the participants’ agency and their stake in the project.¹⁷³ These important recognitions caused by research “disruptions” were compelled by shifts in the project’s orientation towards personal stories rather than narratives exclusively about the site itself.¹⁷⁴ “This was itself dependent upon a recognition of the residents’ stories as valid research within the project.”¹⁷⁵ The authors place responsibility with universities to become an initial set of actors to take on the project of action heritage, due to their dual responsibilities both to the progressive creation of research as well as to the communities in which they are situated.

One of the primary takeaways from Johnston and Marwood’s work is that the work of creating heritage—the actions themselves—are capable of addressing issues that the purported product might be otherwise incapable of adequately addressing.

Both sets of research initiatives discussed above highlight the individual as a primary point of reference for building understandings of the relationships at work in the perhaps more abstracted, bureaucratic realms of heritage institutions. Both agree

¹⁷² Johnston and Marwood, “Action Heritage,” 819.

¹⁷³ Johnston and Marwood, “Action Heritage,” 825.

¹⁷⁴ Johnston and Marwood, “Action Heritage,” 826.

¹⁷⁵ Johnston and Marwood, “Action Heritage,” 826.

that the provocative potential of heritage narratives should not be shied away from, but rather mobilized towards more meaningful engagements with the spatial dimensions of story.

In developing an appropriate set of recommendations to move towards the resolutions of cultural tensions surrounding the state of Oñate, a range of decision making entities and stakeholder capacities have been evaluated for points of entry. With regards to ownership, the statue still belongs to Rio Arriba County. As a federal tool, National Heritage Areas are beholden to approvals through the Department of the Interior. Internally to the NRGNHA, the Board of Directors has struggled to reach anything close to a consensus on what they would like to see changed about the statue's appearance or ongoing presence. Each of these problems points to the ever-present contingencies of local politics and relationships maintained by both organizational and individual stakeholders.

In the textual parameters of the organization's overarching vision and policy objectives, the benefits of the Management Plan, which was approved by the Department of the Interior in 2014, are indeed many. The most important of the Plan's features include its explicit strategies for soliciting widespread local participation in heritage programs. These are both well-articulated in the text and already set in motion in practice through collaborative community projects and a diverse Board of Directors.

Yet while providing a solid platform for broad-based cultural interaction, the Plan fails to explicitly identify ongoing sources of tension or disagreement between living communities as a function of fraught historical relationships. This gap, it could be argued, has forestalled the development of a vocabulary or interpretive scaffolding to

address and overcome conflicts as they arise. In addressing these gaps within the Management Plan, a first step would be to name the conflicts within and regarding the historical narrative outright.

Instead of proposing a prescribed set of managerial parameters, three projects are recommended below for pursuing reconciliation on the subject of the statue's problematic representational content. The objectives of these projects are primarily for stakeholders to learn how to listen to one another, while acknowledging and building from a place of honest reflection upon the traumas of the past. With an ultimate goal to build trust, community participants need to understand why experiences and opinions about heritage representation differ so widely. The projects which follow seek to embrace uncertainty and disagreement by prioritizing the collaborative production of shared knowledge wherever possible.

PROJECT A - "Public Archive," a project of joint fact-finding and shared inquiry into the early Spanish colonial and Pueblo Revolt periods.

The task of truth-telling in a context with such deeply divergent cultural truths demands a mutual undertaking of bearing direct witness to a range of archival stores of historical fact. The NRGNHA Visitor Center could host an exhibition and temporary resource library for primary and archival materials relating to the first century of the colonial era. In addition to the primary accounts recorded by Spanish priests, the examination of archaeological evidence such as that uncovered in Liebmann's studies and other indigenous-originating inquiries would endeavor to decenter the evidentiary burden for history on the written record alone. The exhibit would be designed to open

up an honest conversation between local community members, premised upon the direct interpretation of a variety of sources.

The project would entail three phases of collaborative investigation. An initial team of respected members of both the Hispanic and indigenous communities, aided by a group of independent historians from participating universities, would co-curate the archive from an array of documents and materials made available by loan from other heritage institutions. Next, high school students from the three Heritage Area counties of Taos, Rio Arriba and Santa Fe could compete for the opportunity to design the interpretive experience for these chosen materials in public exhibit. As a tie-in to the initiatives underway within the National Park Service to expand interpretation of the Pueblo Revolt at the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, the final phase could include the creation of an interpretive program connecting the temporary archive to other sites in the Heritage Area.

This scenario would secure buy-in from decision-makers in the organization because of its potential to foster broad-based community engagement while further expanding its coalitions with other heritage sites and institutions. It builds constructively upon existing programs with high school students and works towards positive mutual understanding between constituent groups. Perhaps at the project's finale, the question of the Oñate monument's fate might be reopened for a more informed process of decision-making.



Image 16: Oñate's foot. Source: *New York Times*

PROJECT B - "Represent Conflict," through which the NRGNHA reaches out to the activists who cut off the statue's foot in 1997 in order to put the original foot on display as part of a cross-cultural dialogue on the subject of showcasing Oñate's full story.

The aim of this second project would be to design an exhibit for the Oñate statue's original bronze foot. The premise would be to engage creatively with the activists who carried out the statue's foot amputation 20 years ago, in order to arrange a collaborative display and critical interpretation of the action as a provocative and open-ended engagement with Oñate's legacy. Pairing young students with local artists, a creative competition could be hosted for best interpretative experience. The

theme of the 2018-2019 Santa Fe Art Institute's annual residency program is Truth and Reconciliation.¹⁷⁶

By transferring the role of interpreting this politically contentious event of apparent vandalism to independent teams of artists and youth, the historical subject might be thoughtfully approached from new perspectives. In addition to diffusing some of the political tensions through creative experimentation, the alignment of artistic production with the act of material intervention at the monument's figure might also reorient the public's attention to the new opportunities for historical understanding which the act set into motion.

This second scenario might be best scheduled to follow the first, or they could potentially even function productively in tandem. Long-term benefits would include the provision of more balanced perceptions of narrative ownership of the site through an acknowledgement of Oñate's brutality, addressing its controversial features in an open and direct manner while simultaneously allowing the statue to remain in place.

While the NRGNHA and its Board may initially fear that this gesture could polarize rather than unite the communities it seeks to engage, a transparent process supplemented by rich data and accompanied by ancillary forms of mediation or cultural exchange could eventually allow the foot to become an emblem of mutual recognition rather division.

PROJECT C - "Shared Ownership," in which Rio Arriba County grants partial ownership rights to the statue to the descendants of Oñate's victims, represented by a coalition of Pueblo peoples, as an act of reconciliation with the man's legacy.

¹⁷⁶ Santa Fe Art Institute, "Truth & Reconciliation Residency."

Unequivocally, questions of spatial justice take on new registers of significance for indigenous populations which have historically been denied sovereign access to their traditional lands. In light of this fact, a gesture of shared ownership over a contentious symbol of past violence could function to facilitate a public recognition of historical crimes, projecting the process of reconciliation upon a material embodiment of cultural power.

A recent precedent for transferring ownership of a contentious symbol of colonial violence to a tribal entity was set by the resolution achieved between artist Sam Durant and the Dakota Sioux tribe in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May of 2017. Sam Durant designed his art piece, entitled “Scaffold,” to represent seven executions carried out by the United States between the 1840s and 2006. It was constructed for display at Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany. One of these executions that the piece referenced was the largest mass execution ever carried out in the USA, which was the hanging of 38 Dakota men in Minnesota following the Dakota War of 1862.

After being purchased by Walker Arts Center, the piece was reconstructed in their sculpture garden in Minneapolis, yet before opening to the public, members of the Dakota tribe apprehended what the sculpture represented and demanded they be included in a conversation about the appropriateness of its historical image. After a traditionally-mediated meeting with tribal elders and the museum’s director, Sam Durant signed the rights to his sculpture over to the Dakota Sioux tribe. Having been made aware of the offense it had caused within the Dakota community, parties agreed that the structure would be ritually dismantled and disposed of by fire or burial—and so it was done.

To the extent that the statue of Oñate represents a similar offense of recalling an historical event of considerable traumatic memory for the living descendants of an affected community, an open discussion about how this narrative's representation might be returned to contemporary Pueblo communities warrants collective consideration. Beyond any abstraction of ownership through a deed or bill of sale, the gesture of transferring ownership itself would provide the basis for building more productive, cross cultural relationships.

In the event that full transfer of ownership for the statue itself cannot be agreed upon by the variety of local political stakeholders at play, other measures of ownership over the statue's interpretive narrative and its communal *use* might instead be transferred to local indigenous groups. Such a gesture might indeed be carried out by allowing a system of shared practices at the Center as well as the statue. In Canada, a series of "Reconciliation Dinners" have been hosted to encourage new venues for casual and more intimate conversations between otherwise disparate communities on either side of the First Nation / white settler divide.¹⁷⁷

While many more fundamental measures of spatial justice might not be achieved through interpretative expansion or shared inquiry alone, the process of uncovering a forgotten past might nevertheless thereby be fruitfully initiated. By being invited to share food and memory-in-place, even within the limited temporal space of discrete events, new opportunities are created to build relationships, towards the construction of new collective agencies as well.

¹⁷⁷ Abraham, "Cooking for Reconciliation," 2017.

CONCLUSIONS

University of New Mexico Professor Michael L. Trujillo has argued that in the wake of the 1997 act of statue dismemberment, the Oñate monument became “an ‘open’ icon that dynamically and provocatively represents the complexities and contradictions of New Mexican Chicana/o or Hispanic identity.”¹⁷⁸ The severing of Oñate’s foot, combined with increasing questioning by Native Americans of the pageantry with which the Spanish conquest of the area is commemorated, has increasingly obliged New Mexicans of Spanish descent to examine the more violent realities of their ancestors’ arrival. Indeed, while the event holds added significance when understood with deeper historical perspective, the ultimate effect may be to pose a public *question* rather than directly having the capacity to initiate substantive change. The latter will require the sustained attention and efforts of heritage professionals who are committed to using the site as a tool for wider struggles towards cultural reconciliation.

The project of exhuming the intentionally obscured history of indigenous peoples in New Mexico has been occurring incrementally in many theaters of discourse in recent decades—yet parallel histories persist, their cultural salience proving resilient to critique. The director of the Oñate Monument Center at the time of the foot’s removal, Estevan Arrellano, was quoted to have said, “Give me a break – it was 400 years ago. It’s okay to hold a grudge, but for 400 years?”¹⁷⁹ In 2007, another statue of

¹⁷⁸ Trujillo, “Oñate’s Foot,” 92.

¹⁷⁹ Brooke, “Hispanic Pride and Indian Rage,” 1998.

Don Oñate was erected in El Paso, Texas—the largest equestrian bronze in the world.¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile, Acoma artisan Maurius Chino maintains: “If monuments like these can’t be taken down, maybe it’s time to cut some more feet off.”¹⁸¹

The amputation of Oñate’s bronze foot in 1997 is not only a direct allusion to an event of historical violence, but a replication of practices premised upon indigenous resistance to colonial objects of power. Beyond the symbolic retribution by which an erased history was made newly visible in commemorative materiality, the act functions within an existing vocabulary of hybridization of material culture towards the tactical protection of otherwise disempowered identities.

The aim here has been to locate points of entry whereby those in managerial positions at heritage sites might have the opportunity to develop better methods to interpolate cultural dispute into the heritage site itself. Through a discussion of Michael Liebmann’s archaeological history of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and his analysis of the material culture of Pueblo revitalization efforts which followed, this chapter connects the event of Oñate’s foot removal to wider initiatives of telling forgotten historical narratives through new perspectives on heritage-making. Johnston and Marwood’s “action heritage” reminds us that new communities can be alchemized around the project of navigating and re-prioritizing historical events through the active creation of shared heritage understandings.

With attention to the social and cultural relationships which heritage productions make evident, new forms of collectivities can be created and sustained through

¹⁸⁰ “The Last Conquistador,” 2008.

¹⁸¹ Romero, “Statue’s Stolen Foot.”

collaborative engagements in interpreting complex historical narratives. Heritage can be a tool for understanding and addressing the public's engagement with representational errors at existing sites of heritage, but it demands sustained attention to dissonant narratives, accessed gradually through small steps at local scales.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

While no arrests were made on Monday, August 14, 2017 after demonstrators in Durham, North Carolina looped a yellow strap around the bronze figure of a Confederate soldier and pulled it effortlessly to the ground, Takiyah Thompson and another seven alleged participants were arrested over the next several days. Thompson, a 22-year-old student at North Carolina Central University who was pictured climbing the ladder to affix the strap to the statue's form, would publicly announce her involvement in the action at a press conference on Tuesday afternoon. She was charged with two misdemeanors and two felony charges, including disorderly conduct by injury to a statue, participation in a riot, damage in excess of \$1,500 and inciting others to riot.¹⁸² Yet when Thompson was released from custody on Thursday morning, around 100 people showed up at the courthouse to turn themselves in as well.¹⁸³

The action in Durham provided an initial imperative for this thesis to the extent that it encapsulated a popular crisis about the removal or alteration of historical markers in public space. Demonstrators did not arbitrarily target the Confederate statue, nor can it be attributed to an act of irrational mob fervor. Instead, residents of

¹⁸² Blay, "Takiyah Thompson, Hailed As 'Hero,'" August 16, 2017.

¹⁸³ Lopez, "Crowds stood in line," 2017.

Durham, North Carolina carried to fruition a deeply felt community sentiment for which they received widespread support.



Image 17: “Wow! Line of residents in Durham, NC attempting to turn themselves in for 'crime' of removing Confederate Monuments (photo Katina Parker)” Source: @AuburnSeminary, Twitter, August 17, 2017, 9:41 a.m.

In 2017 and 2018, public outcry succeeded in forcing the removal of certain contested monuments from public space, but many questions remain in the wake of Charlottesville’s tragic escalations. Do we have to wait for events like this, or can preservationists take a more active role in understanding the catalytic impact of historical representations in public space?

As stewards to the material and spatial traces of history, the conservation fields are in an important position of mediating the public’s interaction with symbols of

power. Through an examination of narratives both legitimized and obscured through spaces of commemoration, the goal of this project has been to draw illuminating connections between the designed intentions of public monuments and the organized critique of public voices in asserting agency over complex everyday interactions with the past.

Each of the critical interventions explored in prior chapters differ immensely, despite their correlative intentions to challenge the narrative represented at a monument in public space. This final chapter is devoted to parsing the most illustrative differences between these critiques as collective actions, followed by a close comparison of responses provoked from official mnemonic actors—those with decision-making power over the commemorative forms themselves.

The first portion, entitled ACTION, attempts to typologize the three case study interventions discussed in Chapters 3-5 through the categories of annihilation, performance/protest, and selective alteration. The second portion, REACTION, develops a matching triptych of official responses, delineated as defense, review, and deflection. These categories are not entirely distinct, but instead bleed into one another in interesting and instructive ways. Finally, a fourth variety of more open-ended responses are discussed in tandem with a synthesis of overall findings from the cases explored.

This format is meant to highlight the dual nature of the study in examining both the act of public critique as well as its formal understanding and response by a variety of official actors, in order to locate productive points of entry for the relevant fields of

heritage and historic preservation. Indeed, by endeavoring to better understand these moments of public contestation, preservationists can develop more honest and authentic approaches to conserving fraught representations of history in public space.

ACTION

This study began by defining the notion of “critical intervention.” Moving away from the connotations of meaningless property destruction which are most commonly associated with acts of apparent vandalism, the intention was to reframe unauthorized, collective actions of material or spatial disruption for their pointed aims to dispute a narrative represented by historical commemoration. By devoting attention to public monuments as a particular typology of heritage space, the aim was to place the debate surrounding Confederate monuments into a wider context of comparable symbols of power designed to legitimize and obscure certain modes of historical violence. With this established, critical intervention at such sites can thus be better understood as organized efforts to reveal unmarked injustice, staking the public’s claim to historical representation and expressing a community’s desire to deal honestly with the collective traumas of the past.

—Annihilation—

The actions taken to contest the memorial to police who died as a result of the Haymarket Affair of 1886 have assumed a variety of forms over 100 years, yet in three dramatic instances, the statue was completely decoupled from its pedestal. While the

streetcar incident of 1927 differs from the explosive interventions in 1969 and 1970 by its apparent lack of coordination with other sustained collective claims, a basic lack of primary source information prevents a deeper understanding of this first event of the monument's annihilation.

The members of the Weather Underground, on the other hand, demonstrated a supreme understanding of the police monument's powerful imagery. With his hand raised to "command peace," the authoritative figure encapsulated the deep irony of state-sanctioned violence which took on renewed relevance in a political moment of the highly visible war in Vietnam and the violent repression of Civil Rights activists at home.

As Chapter Three contends, the act of destruction is itself productive of meaning—both for the participants themselves in the experience of cathartic, collective efficacy, as well as in the opportunities for secondary imaging that are produced as a result. Beyond the printed image as an archival trace, the police monument's pedestal stood empty for thirty years, hosting a variety of art installations and performative commemorations at its conspicuous representational absence.

The event in Durham, North Carolina can also be understood to fall within this category of critical intervention by complete annihilation. Despite the unlawfulness of their actions, Takiyah Thompson and the other demonstrators became instant heroes across social media for destroying a public monument whose symbolic support for white supremacy was lambasted yet could not be resolved by official decommission.

Both critical interventions in Chicago and in Durham ultimately succeeded in forcing changes to the monument's commemorative space without seeking to be valorized through institutional legitimacy. The value of these acts of complete destruction lies in the extent to which they can successfully preclude the possibility of misattributing public support. Furthermore, by forcing authorities to consider the cost of replacing the monument, the commemorative gesture's true value is appraised for its relative significance to the present, beyond what it may have meant at its original dedication.

—Performance / Protest—

The actions relating to the statue of Sims, by contrast, sought official validity by making transparent claims for social justice through historical representation. East Harlem Preservation paired artful demonstration with persistent petitioning through every available local political channel, in order to stake a claim not merely to the site, but to equal recognition within the democratic process itself.

In truth, the performance carried out by Black Youth Project 100 shared a similar effect to that produced by the neo-Nazis who marched in defense of the statue of Lee in Charlottesville: both succeeded in making-visible certain forgotten dimensions of violence embedded within the figures represented by a monument. Where the white supremacists in Charlottesville intended to achieve an atmosphere of intimidation, they nevertheless unwittingly laid bare their allegiance to and reliance upon the symbolic weaponry of these commemorative spaces.

In fact, the two performative interventions, occurring only days apart, functioned in compulsory conversation with one another, together illustrating the living threat of white supremacist ideals. Despite the radical differences of their messages and their goals for the sites of commemoration in which they acted, both interventions ultimately transformed the social construction of their respective spaces and thereby helped construct the proverbial scaffolding for each monuments' eventual deconstruction.

—*Selective Alteration*—

The case of the Oñate monument's dismembered foot is perhaps the most compelling of the critical interventions studied here, notable for the cleverness with which the Friends of Acoma achieved a precise narrative transformation through a pointed alteration of the statue's material composition. The anonymous mnemonic actors understood the role of the onlooker's eye, demanding the passing public's participation in the overall interpretive experience—filling in the material and narrative holes, even if only for a brief window of time before the foot was replaced.

Jas Elsner has described the partially erasures produced by Roman *damnatio memoriae* in a similar manner:

The act of deformation and the presentation of deliberately altered works of art are specifically formal gestures within a material semiotics. The preserved damaged object, in its own material being, signals both its predamaged state—a different past, with potentially different cultural, political, and social meanings—and its new or altered state. In part, the meaning of the 'new' monument is defined by its difference from (that is, by the changes made to) the 'old' monument. Like the Roman god Janus, such monuments face in two directions simultaneously...the space for making a 'two-directional' interpretation, for

seeing that a deliberate change has occurred and that this has a meaning, is offered by the object through its material form.¹⁸⁴

Indeed, the acts of annihilation discussed prior can also have a comparable effect. The pedestal which remained in situ for 30 years after the Haymarket Police Monument was twice destroyed also demonstrates the compelling absence of incomplete erasure. The pedestal which remains after the figure of J. Marion Sims was taken down in April 2018 may have a similar effect, though only time will tell how these partial traces are redeployed.

REACTION

The official responses to these critical interventions have been equally as multivalent, though certain trends emerge nonetheless. Each instance of public critique was met with unique set of structural obstacles, set in place to protect the established narratives represented in place, although with varying rigidity and attention to changing metrics for social value. In the extent to which the field of historic preservation has a role in sustaining such obstacles, this project has been a necessary and worthwhile exploration of possible alternative practice.

—Defense—

The fence and guard which was instituted by the City of Chicago after the second bomb destroyed the policeman statue in 1970 was perhaps the most

¹⁸⁴ Elsner, "Iconoclasm and the Preservation of Memory," 210-11.

hyperbolic of responses to what had indeed been an extremely destructive intervention. Yet by no means was this gesture unique. Police protection of government-owned commemorative property has been deployed throughout a plethora of recent protests at Confederate monuments, as well as at the protests carried out by a group called Decolonize This Place at their protest of the monument to Theodore Roosevelt that stands at the entrance to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

This response is ultimately unsustainable, not only for its immense cost, but for the insensitive optics of the publicly-funded, armed defense of commemorative imagery. In the Haymarket instance in particular, the guard stood in living replication of the bronze policeman he was charged to protect. Such responses may at times prove necessary, but at their core they indicate what is likely to be a fear-fueled misunderstanding of protestors claims and a fundamentally asymmetrical attribution of value in an item's essential age over its relative meaning to local communities.

—Review—

The most measured of official responses, review proceedings such as those which began in November 2017 in New York City are primarily contingent upon the commission's membership, as well as its procedural structure. Inescapably bureaucratic by design, review proceedings can offer many opportunities for palliative gestures of expert consideration and participatory inclusion, yet the development of a

process of formal review can also establish constructive precedents for appropriate, official responses to moments of complex public conflict over historical representation.

The report issued by New York City's Mayoral Advisory Commission on Public Art, Monuments and Markers might be argued to do all of the above, yet the commission's composition of esteemed experts has produced a document with both useful language and significant metrics for assessing contemporary cultural significance. One can only hope that its processes will not only be replicated elsewhere, but that its findings take substantive effect within the commemorative spaces in New York City for which it has synthesized invaluable critical perspective.

—Deflection—

While the possibilities currently lay open for how the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area will come to deal with its contentious statue of Don Juan de Oñate at its county-owned visitor center, the responses to the statue's foot removal prior to this new organization's arrival have demonstrated the most disheartening of options: to erase the intervention and pretend as though nothing occurred.

The actions at the statue of Oñate reflect some of the most layered complications of history's selective pacification, manifesting ultimately through parallel narratives and distinct, yet oppositionally defined heritage communities. Yet while tensions may appear to lay dormant for extended periods of time, such seemingly latent conflicts can nevertheless suffer active inflammation, having been systematically repressed rather than authenticity addressed for resolution.

The removal of Oñate's foot in 1997 has lived many lives through media representations, even while the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area's official recognition of the action's claims remains somewhat tenuous. The recommendations discussed in Chapter Five are intended to inspire creative strategies to collaboratively confront difficult historical narratives. The ongoing debates surrounding the imagery of the Oñate monument demonstrate the exacerbated effects of continuously deflected conflicts which have perpetuated many destructive cultural misunderstandings in New Mexico. Sites of heritage must instead endeavor to reconnect disparate communities through honest and collaborative reflection upon both historical events, as well as their complication through subsequent commemorative transformation.

BEYOND REACTIVE PRESERVATION

The structural inequities that persist throughout contemporary American democracy are unavoidably ensnared in convoluted knots of selective recollection about our national past. Memory is a powerful weapon and those in power have always known this. History and public commemoration, by setting the archival and spatial indexes for society's orientation to cultural notions of progress, are made more powerful yet by the magnitude of their common reference.

Ultimately, not all critical interventions are made equal. Success in narrative reorientation requires incredible cleverness in the material or spatial manipulation of the commemorative space as subject. The quality and communicative efficacy of the

critical intervention as a representational gesture is reliant upon the semiotic landscapes of popular imagery, active discourse and adjacent narratives.

In each case study, a discursive shift was achieved by different means. The explosive interventions carried out by the Weather Underground at the Haymarket Police Memorial succeeded in creating a compelling vacancy, while further forcing the City of Chicago to protect the image of police power with a real armed guard. The performative interventions at the Sims statue by the members of Black Youth Project 100, together with sustained efforts of community lobbying, succeeded in redefining the public's understanding of the man commemorated, thereby altering the public commemorative space itself into one worthy of fundamental formal alteration. The intervention at the Oñate monument succeeded most poetically, by representing a narrative which had been overlooked both at the site itself as well as throughout the region's wider commemorative universe.

None of the strategies discussed above can be attributed exclusively to the heritage field itself, but rather are indicative of the more complex and dynamic politics of remembrance in which heritage professionals are only one type of mnemonic actor, among many. What these strategies reveal, however, is a fundamental preference for circumventing conflict, and therefore also of conversation. Even the encouraging processes undertaken by the NYC Mayoral Advisory Commission still demonstrated the incompatibility of bureaucratic efficiency with the open-ended character of true public participation. Constrained by membership, time and money, the municipal entities which oversee public art have little capacity for—or perhaps skills or interest in—sustained efforts of reconciliation.

As Liz Ševčenko and her colleagues at the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience have pointed out, there often exists “a disconnect between the goals of heritage leaders and social reformers in each context.”¹⁸⁵ Where heritage decision-makers have prioritized site, through measures prioritizing integrity and authenticity, what are referred to here as ‘social reformers’ might instead be interested in leveraging site and narrative to ask what they see to be important questions, to foster critical thinking and enable new modes collective action.

But it’s precisely the differences in goals for preserving sites of difficult history that suggest the greatest possibilities for a new approach to heritage. Working together, human rights and heritage leaders can tap the power of place to mobilize new forms of civic participation in social issues. This is not to instrumentalize heritage sites to promote particular political platforms, but to open sites as new forums for dialogue and engagement across perspectives on the more pressing issues their communities face. In other words, to make heritage sites active civic institutions, central to civic life.¹⁸⁶

How can we not fear the implications of heritage significance but instead use it for the collective benefit of the public? How can we embrace rude particularity and messy public truths?

Conflict, the common denominator of each case studied here, cannot truly be planned for or managed. Nevertheless, it might be better anticipated, studied, and approached with greater honesty. The heritage fields are uniquely equipped to facilitate a more productive process towards the creation of more just outcomes than might otherwise transpire. Our expertise—in history as text, as well as in its material, spatial,

¹⁸⁵ Ševčenko, “Sites of Conscience,” 12.

¹⁸⁶ Ševčenko, “Sites of Conscience,” 14.

and lived embodiments—means that heritage professionals have thought deeply and systematically about the significance of heritage places from many vantages.

Yet many potential applications of these forms of knowledge have yet to be fully explored. The heritage professional has been given agency over a site's material conditions and its interpretive trappings, yet only rarely are they invited to participate in critical conversations about power.

Each site of heritage demands a unique array of spatial practices of collective acknowledgement of the past. More than mere traces to be read retroactively, the socially-recalled past functions as an active trajectory—always potentially catalytic. It is this future orientation, often mis-appreciated or overlooked by the public, which makes historic sites preeminently political.

While collective memory has historically been used by those in power to dictate and restrict official socio-cultural narratives, the world today is oversaturated with myriad and often conflicting chronicles of events, emerging instantly as they transpire. Rather than being a function of direct political power, memory today is instead contingent upon the selectivity of individuals to curate their own consumption of media. In this digital present, it is more important than ever to consider how those responsible for preserving spaces of history can stay in touch with the collective needs of larger and more diverse stakeholder groups than ever before.

The cases covered in this thesis are connected not merely by the typology of their forms or the public interventions they have sustained, but furthermore by their shared participation in an active discourse of critical public history in this current

historical moment. The debate over Confederate monuments, while often polarizing, has nevertheless fostered a rich debate about the mnemonic function of monuments in public space and the dimensions of meaning which are often obscured by official narratives. The social production of heritage has thereby been brought into greater public awareness.

While much of this debate may dissipate with time, the question of the past's lived relevance is ever regenerative. The questions of monuments and their changing role in public life have been asked many times before and will invariably be asked again.

The current moment has made the American public increasingly aware of our collective and personal relationships with narratives of history in public space. At long last, there exists a palpable popular motivation to reckon with difficult events of violence and injustice in our national past. Rather than being too wary of history's inevitable transmutations, preservationist must embrace the study of conflict as a window into authentic, collectively held dispositions towards spaces of heritage. Acts of critical intervention can add invaluable wrinkles to the complex significance of the function of history in public space. Within this contemporary cultural demand for radical honesty in our public representations of the past, preservationists can help facilitate a more broadly felt, collective redress of the historical conflicts we continue to live out daily.

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